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SUMMER 1940

POET LORE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Copyright, 1940, by Poet Lore, Inc.

AUBADE	Stanley Kauffmann	98
LOFT'S WISH Translated from the Icelandic by Jakobina Johnson.	Johann Sigurjonsson	99
THIS SOFT BROWN DUST	Stanton A. Coblentz	146
JOHANN SIGURJONSSON	Jakobina Johnson	147
SPRING SONG	Lucy A. K. Adee	149
SEVEN SONGS	Randolph Shaffer, Jr.	150
ALWAYS YOU	Nathan I. Fine	156
THE IDEAL OF FEMININE BEAUTY AT THE TIME OF RONSARD	Marcel Francon	157
THE BOAT OF LOVE	Ralph Adams Cram	165
CONTEMPORARY POETRY IN SPAIN	John Crow	178
MORNING	Anne Marriott	182
TWO SONNETS Translated by Anna Balakian	Charles Baudelaire	183
UNWILLING SOJOURN	Mary Willis Shelburne	184
POEMS Translated by Joy Hausmann	Francis Jammes	185
FROSTED GLASS	Edwin M. Erickson	189
THREE POEMS	Leona Corel	190
EVENING MEMORY	Celia Keegan	191

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AUBADE

A Song For Old Music

By Stanley Kauffmann

Summon delight from out of the grave,
Arouse, sweet lover, away!
Bold morning the bright sun's path doth pave
And passion's master is ever her slave.
The night blooms into day.
Away,
Oh, sweet my lover, away!

No kiss is riper than is the last.
Up, my lover, be gone.
The fuller the feast, the longer the fast,
And the future is further away than the past.
The gray clouds hail the dawn.
Be gone,
Oh, dear my lover, be gone!

I know that desire is gifted with wings.
Drink, my lover, drink full!
But, far on the hill, the morning cock sings
And his song with a mocking of vanity rings.
(Beneath these lips is a skull.)
Drink full!
Think not, dear love, and drink full.

Though you learn that my mouth is compounded of clay,
Heigh-ho, my lover, no tears!
You will be back at this shrine to pray,
For a thousand years are to man as a day
And scars are less than fears.
No tears!
A kiss; farewell, and no tears.

LOFT'S WISH

By JOHANN SIGURJONSSON

Translated from the Icelandic by JAKOBINA JOHNSON

CHARACTERS:

THE BISHOP AT HOLAR
THE BISHOP'S LADY
DISA, *their daughter.*
THE LAND STEWARD AT HOLAR
LOFT, *his son, past twenty, student at the School of Hólar.*
OLAF, *his childhood friend, the Steward's right-hand man.*
STEINUNN, *a kinswoman to* OLAF, *in service at Hólar.*
A BLIND ALMS-SEEKER
HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER, *aged ten*
FIVE ALMS-SEEKERS
A VAGRANT
A MAID-SERVANT
A MAN-SERVANT
VOICE OF CONSCIENCE
APPARITION OF BISHOP GOTTSHALK THE TERRIBLE

PLACE: *Northern Iceland.*
TIME: *Early Eighteenth Century.*

ACT I.

The Bishop's Seat of Hólar, northern Iceland. The Steward's waiting-room. Twilight. Two windows, through which may be seen the home-field sloping towards a river and distant ridges in a haze. Center stage, between the windows, an ancient escritoire. Corner, right, an alcove bed. Table, benches, chairs, chandeliers and dip-candles. A pretentious chest against the wall, right. A book-shelf. Right front, a door from passage. Smaller door left center.

Sunday evening. Six almsmen, some seated, others moving about restlessly.

First Almsman (*relating*). "I pray not for thy wisdom, for of that I have an abundance within — but I pray now for thy mercy."

Second Almsman. Were those his last words?

First Almsman. Ay, those were his last words.

Second Almsman. We were guests at the same farm, the first time I saw him. He was seated on the edge of a bed, with his scrip on his back.

Vagrant. Who was he? I know few people here.

Third Almsman. He was an unfortunate. He thought his head carried so much wisdom that the beggar's scrip on his back maintained his balance.

Vagrant (*laughs*). He must have looked funny.

Fourth Almsman. You would not have laughed, had you seen him. People who are mentally afflicted deserve especially to be God's almsmen.

Fifth Almsman (*has been looking out through window*). The river is rising. It must have rained heavily in the mountains.

(*Enter a ten-year-old girl, leading a blind almsman. He carries a small package under his arm.*)

Blind Almsman. God's blessing on all!

The Others. God's blessing on you!

(*Blind man turns to the left.*)

The Child. Here I am, grandfather.

Blind Almsman. An old habit, daughter; from the years when we were shown into the bishop's own waiting-room. (*Sits.*) How many of us are there here now?

Fourth Almsman. There were six of us ahead of you.

(*Church bells are heard.*)

Maid (*enters right, walks up to the child.*) The Bishop's Lady has sent for you. She noticed you and your grandfather outside. (*Child turns aside bashfully.*)

Blind Almsman. Go, my child. The Lady wants to be kind to you. I'll wait. (*They leave.*)

Blind Almsman. Who preaches tonight?

Fifth Almsman. The dean.

Blind Almsman. When the Lord Bishop himself does

not preach, the hymnal is my greatest joy. I have often marvelled that such a large edifice could so softly echo the harmonies.

(*Silence.* LOFT *enters — looks around.*)

LOFT. Pharaoh's lean cows, all in one group! (*Walks up to the blind man, lays a hand on his shoulder.*) I do not refer to you. Have you brought that which I asked you to get me?

BLIND ALMSMAN (*removes wrappings from an old book in board-binding*). The owner declared the book was not for sale, but that he would loan it for a month, since you were the Steward's son and a learned man. (*Hands it to* LOFT.) I promised faithfully to return it to him.

LOFT (*turns pages for a moment.*) If my father asks for me, say that I am indisposed and have retired. (*Takes out a coin from his purse.*) Here's something for your trouble. (*Goes out, left.*)

FIRST ALMSMAN. Easy for him to scoff at us unfortunates; he has never been obliged to go hungry.

BLIND ALMSMAN. Wealth does not always bring happiness. An unhappy mind often goes with an ever-full stomach.

FIRST ALMSMAN. I have heard it rumored that he delves into other lore than is required for the ministry.

BLIND ALMSMAN. What are you holding back that you cannot frankly tell?

FIRST ALMSMAN. We need not look far into the past. During the time of our Lord Bishop lately deceased, some of the students here proved to be delving into sorcery. And what has once occurred may occur again.

(*Enter the Bishop in full pontificals — also the Steward, attired for church.*)

ALL ALMSMEN (*rising.*) God grant the Lord Bishop a long life.

BISHOP (*friendly.*) Remain seated.

(*The blind man sits, others remain standing. The Steward goes up to the escritoire, pulls out a drawer and brings out a package of money.*)

BISHOP (*still friendly.*) I've heard that you are dissatisfied with my gifts. You think them too small?

ALL ALMSMEN. Nay — not so — God helping us.

BISHOP (*very friendly.*) You may safely confide in me. Frankness is a virtue.

FIRST ALMSMAN (*gaining courage.*) We feel that those of us who regularly visit here, have closer connection with the Bishop's seat than those who happen along on rare occasions. (*Bolder.*) Do I not speak truthfully?

ALL ALMSMEN (*except blind man and vagrant.*) Ay.

THIRD ALMSMEN. The Lord Bishop shows equal largess to all.

BISHOP. Which one of you is least needy? From him I shall withhold his share, in favor of the one whose need is greatest. (*Silence.*)

STEWARD. The Lord Bishop awaits your reply. (*Hands over the money to the Bishop.*)

FIRST ALMSMAN. Least in need I am not — but I am less deserving than the others.

BISHOP (*coldly.*) That I did not ask. (*Distributes alms.*) Let each one accept his share; and pray the Lord to uproot all jealousy from your hearts.

(*The almsmen bow to him and mutter thanks. They then depart, except the blind man.*)

BLIND ALMSMAN (*trembling.*) "Unto you I gave sun and stars and you thanked me not."

STEWARD (*entering item in his account book.*) Given their way, they would divide the holdings of the Bishop's See, with no method save their own jealous instinct.

BISHOP. This See is so endowed, that God's poor need never depart empty-handed.

(*The Bishop's Lady appears and pauses in the doorway.*)

STEWARD. Improving highways and building bridges would aid the farmers and increase the revenue of the diocese. A new church might then be erected, with rooftree higher than any in Iceland.

BISHOP. The most wretched among almsmen is still God's temple — although more frail than those of stone.

BISHOP'S LADY. The Land-steward is concerned with many matters. Are you now at leisure to attend service?

BISHOP. Ay, at leisure indeed, my love.

Bishop's Lady (*to blind man.*) Your grandchild will soon be here, when her hair has been taken care of. (*To* Bishop.) She reminded me so vividly of our own daughter at that age, that I am giving one of her girlhood dresses to the child.

Steward. When is the Bishop's daughter expected home?

Bishop's Lady (*without looking at him*). We expect her now any day.

Bishop (*warmly.*) You look forward to seeing her again?

Bishop's Lady. Ay, this has been a long year, though I knew she was in friendly keeping. (*They leave.*)

Steward (*to blind man.*) Do you know if my son has been here?

Blind Almsman. He was here a brief while ago. I was to say, if you asked about him, that he had retired feeling indisposed.

Steward (*worried.*) The Bishop will miss him at the service. (*Opens the door quietly and calls softly* — Loft! *His face expresses tenderness as he turns to the blind man, closing door softly.*) I have not the heart to wake him. He has doubtless pored over his books until the small hours. (*Smiles.*) When he was a child, they called him the Little Bishop, because he wore such a far-away look. (*Walks to the door; pauses.*) I shall see you again after the service.

(*The blind man listens till the footfall dies away, then pulls out a large dotted kerchief, with coins tied up in a corner; adds the newly-acquired coins; sits very still.*)

Loft (*enters, book in hand, sits opposite looking hard at blind man.*) How long have you been blind?

Blind Almsman. I have traveled in darkness for nearly forty years.

Loft. You have doubtless often wished to get back your eyesight.

Blind Almsman (*silent a moment.*) Do you know the story of the ferry-man and St. Thorlak?

Loft. Nay.

Blind Almsman. 'Twas the dead of winter, with frost

and drifting snow. The ferry-man was to take the chaplain from Skálholt across White River. When he had crossed the river, he found ten of God's almsmen there, asking to be ferried across to the Bishop's Seat. Out of kindness he took them all into his boat. But the load was too heavy and the boat capsized. The ferry-man, dressed in a leather suit, sank to the bottom. He struggled and tried to wade ashore, but was overpowered, and with his last breath implored St. Thorlak, that his body might be washed ashore on the Skálholt side of the river. Then he saw a hand which swept the waters away from his face. Thrice it came and the ferry-man safely reached the shore.

LOFT. Why do you tell me this story?

BLIND ALMSMAN. Oft have I wished that the hand of God might sweep aside the darkness from my vision.

LOFT (*with flaming intensity.*) Are you sure your wish has been fervent enough?

(*The blind man is silent.*)

LOFT. I know that a wish may effect a miracle. It so happened of old and happens so still!

(*Enter maid and child. Child wears a new costume, maid carries a package.*)

CHILD (*running to her grandfather*). Feel it, grandfather. I have a new and splendid costume. There is lace at the neck.

MAID. Ay, she is right gay looking. The Bishop's Lady had all her old garb removed and replaced by a complete costume.

BLIND ALMSMAN. Did you mind to thank the lady?

MAID. Ay, that she minded.

LOFT (*having gazed at the child in surprise, steps up and strokes her hair*). How silken-soft your hair! Will you be my lady-love? (*The child cuddles up to her grandfather.* LOFT *smiles.*) Are you shy? (*Takes out purse.*)

(*Church bells are heard.*)

MAID (*lays down package*). Now you must see to your belongings yourself — I must hasten to service. (*Leaves.*)

BLIND ALMSMAN (*rising*). We must also take our leave.

LOFT (*holding a silver coin*). Keep it in the pocket of

your pretty new costume. (*Drops coin in her pocket. She kisses him.*)

BLIND ALMSMAN (*on his way to the door, turns to* LOFT). I kept on wishing until it had become a sin. When I gave up wishing, my soul gained peace. (*They leave.*)

(LOFT *follows them with his eyes for a moment. Opens book. It is bound in boards. The ornate first letter in red covers half the page. Lays book on table. Finds key and opens chest. Kneels. Takes out books and stacks them around. Appears to be searching for something.*)

STEINUNN (*entering, speaks low*). Loft! (*He does not hear her. Louder — sorrowfully*). Loft!

LOFT (*looks up; seeing* STEINUNN *loses interest*). Is it you?

STEINUNN. Did you expect someone else?

LOFT. I thought you were on duty.

STEINUNN. There was a time when you recognized my footfall. Now you do not even know my voice.

LOFT. Did you come to reproach me?

STEINUNN. No. (*Silent for a moment.*) I dressed in my best today. I know that you like to see me so. Look at me.

LOFT (*rising*). I think you look best in your working clothes. What do you want of me?

STEINUNN (*serious*). I must speak to you.

LOFT. The servants are gossiping; I can tell by your looks.

STEINUNN. No.

LOFT. What, then, do you want of me?

(STEINUNN *goes over to window in silence.*)

LOFT (*follows her; speaks more gently*). Is it of the future?

STEINUNN (*absently writing on window pane*). Once, last summer, I felt as though I had committed a great crime. The room was filled with dank gloom and there might have been frost on the window panes. Your voice dissolved that gloom.

LOFT (*stands still and observes her*). Do you think that you would miss me, if I were dead?

STEINUNN (*facing him*). That you know.

LOFT (*goes back to the chest*). I know you would grieve the first few months — possibly until the sod turned green — (*Kneels by chest as before*) though most people's wounds heal faster than those of mother earth. (*Stacks books around.*)

STEINUNN (*offended*). I'd like to burn all your books.

LOFT. What crime have they committed?

STEINUNN (*concerned*). You look so worn. Your work is too exacting. No human being can stand the strain of working both night and day, neither is there any need. I have heard the rector himself marvel at your learning. I know you can graduate this year without another look at a book . . .

LOFT. I agree.

STEINUNN. But that you will not, if you overdo and risk your health. At least you should not deny yourself sleep.

LOFT (*deep in his books*). The more I read, the less I seem to know.

STEINUNN (*at a loss*). All of your father's ambitions center in you, his only child. I sometimes fear that it may weigh you down.

LOFT (*rising*). My father's ambitions and mine follow divergent ways.

STEINUNN (*raising her voice*). What are *your* ambitions?

LOFT. Mine? To stand on the threshold of all the mysteries of the universe, armed with all the wisdom of the ages.

STEINUNN (*in fear*). Mysteries? What do you mean?

(LOFT *is silent and turns pages.*)

STEINUNN (*coming closer*). The servants have begun to talk. They say you read ungodly books. They spy on you. They have heard you talking when you were alone and think you commune with spirits.

LOFT (*takes two steps*). Those who know naught believe all.

STEINUNN. I have not warned you sooner because they dare not speak openly, on account of your father's position

here. But they are getting more and more malicious. They say they have seen you in the churchyard at dead of night.

LOFT (*facing her*). Was it this you wished to tell me?

STEINUNN (*evades his question but moves closer*). For your own sake you should rest from your studies awhile. You need not be idle. Join the servants at work; that would hush their gossiping. And it would give me untold joy to hear the scythe singing in your hands once more.

LOFT. But you — what do you think?

STEINUNN. You have greatly changed since first we met. Towards me you are a different person. Sometimes I scarcely recognize you. Even your face has changed. When you mentioned death awhile back, I thought you were ill.

LOFT (*looks crafty for a moment; thinks of frightening her; but forgets in a new enthusiasm*). Should I stretch a hand into the darkness, I know it would not be in vain. Have you heard of Gottshalk the Terrible and the Red Parchment? I call it the Book of Might.

STEINUNN (*in fear*). Ay, that I have.

LOFT. He who mastered all the knowledge therein, would become the mightiest on earth. Hence Gottshalk took it along into his grave. He was jealous of this power. I have seen this book.

STEINUNN (*in anguish*). You!

LOFT. One night, recently, I lay upon his grave in the churchyard. The idea crept upon me that perchance in my sleep I might be able to decipher some of its contents. And lo, the Bishop stood before me in red chasuble, reading! He held the book so high that his face was hidden from me. The leaves shrivelled up as he read, and fell to the earth as ashes. (*Looks at her fiercely and speaks as though reading from a book.*) "He who with his whole soul wishes the death of another, shall bow down and speak thus." (*Becomes terrified.*) No, those words I refuse to recall! (*Crosses over to chair, sits, covers face with his hands, elbows resting on his knees.*)

STEINUNN (*still for a moment, then her face lights up. Goes to him and kneels down*). That is why you looked so ill and constantly troubled. (*Half-weeping, half-smiling*).

I feared it was on my account. (*Rises and strokes his hair.*) I have loved you so dearly. It shames me to confess it, but I have wished you were ill that I might nurse you. I should have watched over you day and night. (*Hands imploring.*) This you will not believe — but I have wept with joy. (*Relaxes.*) I have seen a grassy plot, parched and withered, turn green over night. The dewy grass wept with joy. (*Kneels.*) Together we shall resist all evil powers! Traveling alone in the dark, I am in terror, but two have nothing to fear. (*Her voice thrills with love.*) I have been told that all things unclean retreat before him who leads a little child. (*Whispers.*) Loft!

Loft (*rising*). I should dwell apart from all human beings. People disturb me. The unknown whispers to me only in solitude. In utter darkness, the flint gives off its brightest sparks. Solitude is my utter darkness! What is it to the servants if I lose sleep? I am aware of their hatred. That is because my wishes are larger than theirs! My wishes are powerful and boundless! In the beginning there was a wish! Wishes are the souls of men!

Steinunn. Did you hear what I was saying?

Loft. It provokes me that the servants should dare slander me. (*Sarcastic.*) When I think aloud, they think I commune with spirits. (*His voice changes.*) Ay, I heard what you were saying.

Steinunn. Do you remember how long a time since last you kissed me? Do you no longer love me?

Loft. I do not know whether I have the ability to love any human being. If we could both forget what has passed between us, it would cease to be.

Steinunn. Are you able to forget?

Loft. Why should it not have been a dream?

Steinunn. My body has its memory. (*Sarcastic.*) Do you fear your father?

Loft (*impatient*). My patience has bounds. You know as well as I do, why we were forced to secrecy. My father would have disowned me. He would have had me expelled from the school. If I should never again be allowed to open a book, I would feel as though I were blind. A half-year more and I shall graduate. After that I shall be able to

strike back. You promised to wait. Indiscretion is not courage.

STEINUNN (*about to weep*). If only you showed some affection! You have not even kissed me.

LOFT. What are kisses? I merely kissed the lips of a child.

STEINUNN (*rises; her mood darkens*). Have I changed since you no longer love me as before? (*Takes a deep breath and touches the silver eyelets on her bodice.*) Once you told me these silver eyelets were alive — each with an individual soul. You said that my breathing animated them. I breathe as before. I speak, I laugh and weep as before. Last spring you rose with the sun, when it was *my* turn to start the fire. You said you enjoyed seeing the firelight play about my face. Now I must be content with writing your name in the ashes. Surely the firelight is unchanged.

LOFT. Be not so intense.

STEINUNN. You may be sure I have forgotten nothing you have told me. I have drawn up the marriage contract. You have sealed it with your kisses. Flaming wax is cool beside your kisses. And I have called on God to bear me witness. If your love was a mere sham to gain your ends, you were mistaken. I have neither worldly goods nor friends. (*Laughs.*) But I shall not release you. You have given me strength. (*Her arms about him.*) I could reduce you to ashes, like a living flame.

LOFT. Someone may enter.

STEINUNN. I should not care, even if it were your father. You are hiding something from me. (*Looks into his face.*) I wish that he would hold a burning candle to your face, that I might see your true self. (*Releases him.*)

LOFT (*uneasy*). I know not whether you are the cause, but I am conscious of a steady conflict with some inevitable duty. You demand my constant concern for *you* and for the future — every hour of the day. I feel it, though you but look into the room. Lately, this has almost become an accusation. I cannot bear up under this any longer. My thoughts *must* be free. (*Fingers the books, and looks crafty.*) Possibly I shall never find the object of my search.

STEINUNN. I hate your books!

LOFT. Some men know by instinct where to find a hidden wellspring. They possess the power to release soul from body. I, also, possess that power. (*Looks at* STEINUNN.) When I kissed you for the first time, my soul was released from my body.

STEINUNN (*sarcastic*). Your soul was released from your body?

LOFT. You laugh. I shall tell you what took place. (*Leads her to the bench; they sit.*) You had been here at the Bishop's Seat some time, without attracting my attention. One evening, in warm weather, I went out to seek peace for my studies. I heard some one singing. I followed the sound. You did not see me, for I hid behind a boulder. You were out in the river, splashing the water over your naked body. I had never seen anything that affected me so deeply. I trembled with fear. (*More warmly.*) Had you been one of the seal-maidens who dance on the sands on midsummer nights, I should have stolen your coat of fur. I should not have returned it, even though you told me you had children in the deep. I should have wished to keep you all my life, though it were cruel to do so. (*Draws closer.* STEINUNN *rises. He suddenly rises and grips her hand.*)

LOFT. No, you must listen. (*They sit again.*) From that hour I was unable to forget you. One night, when my thoughts of you would not let me sleep, I crept out of the house. I lay down on my back. (*Closes eyes.*) My soul seeped into the ground. I stood by your bedside and kissed you. You have told me, yourself, that this same night you dreamed that I stood by your bedside and kissed you. You saw me disappear through the doorway when you awoke. (*His arm has stolen around her waist, and he stoops to kiss her, saying softly*: Steinunn.)

STEINUNN (*rising*). Let me go!

LOFT (*laughs*). You said that, also, the first time I kissed you. (*Draws her suddenly closer and kisses her.*) Let us go to the green dell where we were that day when I did not know whether I heard the little brook running past — or the blood coursing through my own veins.

(*Silence. Footsteps are heard.*)

OLAF (*enters; pauses when he sees* STEINUNN; *turns to*

LOFT). I thought you had perhaps not gone to the service. Do I intrude?

LOFT (*at a loss*). No, no.

OLAF (*dejectedly*). No need to conceal anything from me — I know you love each other. (LOFT *is silent;* STEINUNN *looks at* LOFT; *then goes past* OLAF *towards the door.*) Must you leave because I come? (STEINUNN *goes out.*)

OLAF (*steps closer*). Loft, I came to speak to you frankly of a matter which has grieved me deeply. (*Sits on the bench silently.*)

LOFT (*moves a chair and sits by him*). What is it, Olaf?

OLAF. Steinunn had dwelt about a month at the Bishop's Seat, when I returned from my last trip after stockfish. Instantly I noticed a change in her. She avoided me. Up to that time she had always met me frankly and pleasantly. (*In some heat.*) Do you know how credulous one may become through intense desire? In my ignorance, I thought that she had sensed my love for her and had become shy in my presence.

LOFT (*rising*). Olaf!

OLAF. No, you must not interrupt me. (LOFT *sits again.*) It was not long until I noticed that it was you she smiled upon. Then I did something, of which I had considered myself incapable: I turned spy! Of an early morn, when you thought no one near, I saw you kiss her.

LOFT (*rising — sarcastic*). Was that a crime?

OLAF (*rising also*). Since then, I have constantly been at war with myself. My inward hatred increased. I tried to uproot it. It was like a heavy rock lodged in loose soil. With every attempt to remove it, I found it sinking in more hopelessly. (*Silence.*)

LOFT. What do you mean?

OLAF (*close to him*). I wished you no ill. You have been my friend. Convince me that you were unable to act otherwise. If you tell me that, I shall try to forgive you.

LOFT (*still sarcastic*). Do I need your forgiveness?

OLAF (*controls himself with difficulty*). Your conscience is troubling you. Ever since I returned, you have

avoided being alone with me. He who has wronged another, ofttimes comes to hate that other.

LOFT. You accuse me of what?

OLAF. Do you remember our childhood game of choosing a bride? You demanded a princess from a foreign land, (*tenderly*) but I my little cousin Steinunn.

LOFT. You may have the princess.

OLAF (*barely controlling himself*). You knew it was I who brought Steinunn here. You taunted me whenever I mentioned her name. (*Angry.*) You knew I loved her dearly. Do not dare deny that!

LOFT (*hesitant*). I did not know you loved Steinunn so dearly. (*Accusing.*) Why did you not confide in me?

OLAF. You knew she was the only maid I loved. I thought that sufficient. (*Mournful.*) When we, in childhood, found an unusual flower, or a dell where there were many berries, each claimed a special ownership. Each might yield a special place to the other, but steal it, never! (*Bitterly.*) In those days we needed no property line between us.

LOFT (*low voice*). I was beside myself.

OLAF. I have tried to excuse you. You are younger than I am, and you are impetuous. I have tried to put myself in your place. Could I have treated a friend thus? Why did you fall in love so suddenly? You had seen Steinunn before. Did you wish to assure yourself that Steinunn was a suitable match for *me?* Or are you such a child that a toy gives you joy, chiefly because somebody else wants it?

LOFT. You do not spare me!

OLAF. Why don't you defend yourself?

LOFT. What do you wish me to say?

OLAF. Each day I have expected you to come to me. But you did not stop at robbing me of Steinunn. You must also withdraw your friendship. I did not wish to see you as a repentant sinner, but I longed to witness your happiness — yours and Steinunn's. (*Deeply moved.*) I think I could have extended a brother's hand.

LOFT (*touched*). I know that I have wronged you. (*Goes up to him; speaks quietly.*) Olaf, can you forgive me?

(OLAF *sits in silence*).

LOFT (*turns away*). I, likewise, have had my hours of anguish.

OLAF (*rising*). I shall try to continue as your friend. (*Indicates the books on the shelf. His voice greatly changed.*) Is it necessary to become so absorbed in reading? You deny yourself even sleep.

LOFT. I read more books than the school is concerned with.

OLAF. You would think it absurd, but disquieting as well, if you knew what the servants say about you. (*Brief pause.*)

LOFT. What say the servants?

OLAF. They fear you. They believe you are in league with some supernatural power.

LOFT. That's the second time I hear this today. Have these rumors reached my father or the Bishop?

OLAF. Not so far.

LOFT (*laughs coldly*). It amuses me to think the servants fear me. (*Kneels by the books and carefully arranges them in the chest.*)

OLAF. I told them in no uncertain terms that these were silly rumors. Why should you try to enter league with the powers of darkness — you whose every wish has been granted? Moreover, I have no faith in supernatural powers — nor good nor evil.

LOFT (*with bitter humor*). In the days when we boiled and ate the claws of a hawk, in order to become strong men, you understood all my wishes.

OLAF. You mean that now I no longer do?

LOFT (*looking up from the books*). Have you ever wished to know the mysteries of the dead?

OLAF (*coldly*). The dead have no mysteries.

LOFT. All of you claim to be very wise. The righteous go to heaven — the wicked to hell's fires. Books have revealed other truths to me. Once a skull was unearthed from an old grave. It was dark brown with age — all flesh fallen away from the face — but the eyes still blazed in the sockets with life and anguish. That man's punishment must have been that his soul was not released from the body.

OLAF. Do you believe all that you find in these books?

LOFT. This particular thing I remember more clearly than many another which I *know* to be *true*. (*Opens one of the books and fingers it softly.*) To some, these symbols are as meaningless as bird-tracks on the ocean-beach. But to me they speak in terms of life. They move me to joy or to sorrow. They teach me an ancient wisdom. The souls of the dead abide in these books.

OLAF (*sarcastic*). Ay, or the *lies* of the dead.

LOFT (*after a moment's pause*). You do not believe in supernatural powers. Yet you will not deny that fire burns in the interior of the earth — under your feet — although you have never seen it. (*Grins.*) It manifests itself only as a red catspaw, making sport of human beings. Destruction is its nature — and yet it is compelled to serve. In the beginning of time, some wise man mastered it through sorcery. (*Mysterious.*) If I revealed to you that this hidden fire is but the devil's shadow, you would, perhaps, begin to understand.

OLAF. I should begin to fear for your reason.

LOFT (*his voice fired with intensity*). God fashioned man from clay, but this clay has been through the fire — and few there are who can direct their own powers! Imagine a being whose very shadow is fire! If a man could bring that being into submission . . . You are fond of horses. You can bridle the wildest among them. I intend to bridle the powers of darkness!

OLAF (*close to him and speaks tenderly*). I feel seriously concerned about you, Loft. You do not live in the world of realities. You live in a disturbing and unwholesome dream. You are over-strained. You must relax.

LOFT (*more composed*). No one knows how much may be lost in one heedless moment. Perchance at that very moment some great truth was about to be revealed; but no one was ready to receive it. You do not know how often I have wrestled with sleep, when it threatened to overpower me! Sleep I hate, for it robs me of time! But all of you live as though eternity were at your disposal.

OLAF. Rest and work must go hand in hand. Remember, it is your duty towards your love to preserve your strength.

LOFT (*impatient*). It is useless to waste more words; we can never agree. (*Sits at table; opens book.*)

OLAF. I intended to warn you. Your father has great authority here. But even that has its limits. It might go hard with you, should the Bishop hear what the servants are saying.

LOFT. You babble on like a running brook! The servants have no grounds for their talk. You're full of illusions, you and Steinunn. I'm tired of both of you. (*Pores over the book.*)

OLAF (*silent a moment, then with cold looks and hard voice goes up to* LOFT). Are you tired of Steinunn?

LOFT (*continues reading; does not reply. The sound of horses' hoofs outside.* LOFT *looks up.*) Who could be riding up for vespers so late?

OLAF (*with intense emotion*). I expected to see your face light up at the mention of her name. (*Grabs him by the shoulder, lifting him from the chair.*) Is she merely your plaything?

LOFT (*astounded*). What ails you, man?

OLAF. I no longer understand your wishes. The time may come when you shall be unable to fathom mine. (*Lets go of him.*)

LOFT (*straightening up*). Who asked you to interfere in my affairs?

OLAF (*takes the book away from* LOFT). You robbed me of the only woman I ever loved. See that you do well by her — or you'll have me to reckon with. (*Breaks the board-binding and tosses book to the floor.*)

LOFT. Are you insane? (*Picks up book.*)

DISA (*appears, laughing, in the doorway*). Here I am!

LOFT (*surprised*). Are you here?

DISA. Do you not see me? (*Laughs.*) You two look most deadly serious. Are you not going to bid me welcome? (*Greets each with a kiss.*) Greetings, Olaf! Greetings, Loft!

BOTH. Kind greetings to you; and welcome home!

DISA (*excited*). There is evening service; I heard the hymns. Are father and mother at church?

LOFT. Ay.

DISA (*laughs*). I imagine they will be surprised when they see me. How has it been with you? Father and mother and all of you? (*Removes wraps while speaking.*)

LOFT. Well; and with you?

DISA. Most excellently! How wonderfully pleasant to be at home! I raced on ahead of my companions. Are you the only ones not in church?

LOFT. Ay!

DISA (*laughs*). You heathens!

OLAF. My kinswoman Steinunn is not in church, either.

DISA. Oh, her I do not know. (*Excited.*) I had all but forgotten about my horse. (*To* OLAF.) Will you hurry and take off the saddle, and care for him? The dear creature was in a lather. (OLAF *leaves.*)

DISA (*speaks fast*). Listen to the dream I had last night! (*Serious.*) I saw a large chestnut horse swimming toward me across the river, and pulling the water along with him up to the very door. (*With her arms indicates this. Goes quickly to the window; opens it, pointing.*) Ay, this way he came! (*Singing heard from church.*) Hush, my dear old church! (*Listens. Singing stops. Looks at* LOFT. *Laughs happily.*) How you stare!

LOFT (*hesitant*). How you've grown up in one year! You were still a child when you went away.

DISA (*proud*). Ay, I'm grown up now. I can no longer wear any of my old dresses. (*Goes swiftly to his side, whispers laughing.*) Besides, I've had a suitor. (*Draws back; a little shamefacedly. Suddenly smiles again and points.*) There is the knot in the boards, which looks like a small and wrinkled face. I shall never forget the time you made me sit still and stare at it for a whole hour to wait for a horse-fly buzzing around to settle on it. Then it would blink its eyes! (*Grimaces and blinks and threatens* LOFT *with her fist.*) You headstrong boy! No, I must greet the rest of the household. Are you coming with me?

LOFT (*feigns indifference*). So the young lady has had a suitor?

DISA. You did not expect that! What would you have done if I had accepted him? (LOFT *looks at her in surprise.*)

DISA (*impatient*). Well! Tell me!

LOFT. I would have saddled my white war-steed, and with a large company found a short-cut across the mountain passes. I would then have challenged him to single combat on a lonely isle, in a rapid river. His blood would soon have colored the sands the bright hue of the willow herb.

DISA (*interrupts, laughing, after observing him closely*). Ho, ho, you think you can still convince me of anything you please — as you used to do when we were children! You own no war-steed; you command no company; and the mountain passes are impassable in winter!

LOFT (*mood suddenly changed to sadness*). Oh, how I wish that we were still children!

DISA (*quiet*). Why do you say that so mournfully? (*Studies him affectionately.*) How pale and drawn you look! Have you been ill?

LOFT (*resolute once more*). No, I am in perfect health. (*Stoops and tosses the books recklessly into the chest.*)

DISA (*studies him*). Have you met with some misfortune? (LOFT *is silent.*)

DISA (*impulsive*). I know that you looked forward to going abroad; to becoming a very learned man, like my father. Is your father unwilling to allow you to go, perhaps?

LOFT (*straightening up*). I don't know.

DISA (*happy*). There, you see I was able to guess the cause of your worries! (*Excited.*) I shall undertake to convert your father. I can't remember that he ever refused any request of mine. If he does not agree, I shall get my father on our side. I know your father would be guided by his opinion. You have nothing to fear!

LOFT (*without emotion*). Tell me something of your journey. You came the mountain road? Was the weather fine?

DISA (*hurt*). We had good weather all the way. We rode by way of Kjol. (*Excited.*) There's no quarrel between your father and mine, is there?

LOFT. Not that I know of.

DISA (*fumbling with her dress*). My mother thinks your father somewhat overbearing. That I know. But I think

it quite right that my father *should* occupy his whole mind with the kingdom of God. You'll not think of worldly matters and possessions, either, when you have become a truly learned man. Do you think so?

LOFT (*observes her closely while she speaks. His voice tender, and faltering*). Why have I not thought more frequently of you!

DISA. Why won't you confide to me the cause of your worries? We have always been like brother and sister.

LOFT. I wish I were free to sail away to foreign lands immediately. I think I've been wishing this ever since you appeared in the doorway. Imagine a ship at anchor — but straining to sail away.

DISA (*shakes her head*). I don't know what you mean.

LOFT (*more composed*). In my mind I have sailed away, many a time. Standing in the heart of the barren wastes I have sailed the whole island far into southern seas. The glaciers became white sails spread full in the sunlight; and the blue mountains rose and fell with the heaving swell.

DISA (*has watched him in admiration. Suddenly smiles*). This reminds me of our old game, when you flew away with me on your flying carpet. It's still there (*indicating*), our old carpet! (*Goes over to it.*)

LOFT (*going there also*). My father uses it for a doormat. Shall we test it once again for the old magic power?

DISA. Ay! (*They carry the rug out on the floor.*)

LOFT (*steps on it*). Come, fly with me!

DISA (*laughs*). Are you still so simple-minded?

LOFT (*beckons seriously*). Come!

DISA (*shakes her head*). No, I do not care to.

LOFT (*stretches out his hands*). Come, Disa!

DISA (*goes up to him on the carpet. As they talk, a rosy after-glow has lighted up the sky.*)

LOFT (*arm around her waist*). Now we'll close our eyes, that we cay see more clearly. (DISA *closes her eyes and* LOFT *mutters as if repeating some magical incantation.*) Fly, fly, carpet — wheresoe'er you choose! (*Blows on* DISA'S *eyelids.*) Now the wind blows on your eyelids. (*Closes eyes; they sway back and forth.*) See, how the

ground slips away from under our feet. Now we are lifted high above the clouds. Do you hear a distant booming? That is the ocean. (*Mutters.*) Fly, carpet, fly! (*Opens his eyes and looks at* DISA.) Do you know the wishing-well and the pebbles that dance therein? Thither we fly! The pebbles leap out of the water, innumerable — clear or many colored — each with a character all its own — varied as the thoughts of men. (*Sound of organ prelude comes through the open window.*) One has life-giving powers — it is red as blood. One invisibility — a deep blue with markings of gold. One means release from pain — heart-shaped and dark. (LOFT *clenches his fist, then opens it.*) But the wishing-stone itself you cannot see, for it lies at the bottom of the well and takes no part in the dance. But a white reflection from it rises to the surface and shines! (*His voice bright with joy.*) When that reflection falls on your face, you are granted a wish. It is on my face now, Disa! Disa! (*Lets go of her but stands with arms outstretched.*) Now you must kiss me!

(DISA *opens her eyes; looks at him; and with arms about his neck, kisses him.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II.

(*The following day. Same setting. A heavy storm, rain dashing against the window panes. The* STEWARD *is seated at the escritoire. In front of him an open book of accounts.* OLAF *seated near by.*)

STEWARD (*closing book*). I have now told you all that is necessary. (OLAF *rises.*) Should it so happen that I remain away more than eight days, you must put the servants to such work as you deem most useful. I can depend on you.

OLAF. Shall I order the horses brought at four o'clock in the morning, even though this storm is still blowing?

STEWARD. Ay.

OLAF. I shall see to it. (OLAF *leaves.*)

(*The* STEWARD *sits still a moment, then pulls out a drawer and lifts out a large key. Rises and walks over to a chest in the corner between escritoire and wall — stoops, unlocks it and lifts the lid.* LOFT *enters — pausing in the doorway.*)

LOFT. You sent for me?

STEWARD (*closes chest*). Come closer, my son. Sit down. (LOFT *sits.*) I lay awake last night thinking of you and of your future. Are you still minded to go abroad when you have completed your studies here?

LOFT. Ay, that it is.

STEWARD. It pleases me that you are not minded to seek any small office immediately — pleases me highly. You were all too young to be a priest. What is your aim and choice?

LOFT (*rising*). To acquire greater knowledge.

STEWARD. Be seated, my son! (LOFT *sits.*) I blame no one for hoarding gold without definite object in view. Neither do I blame you for desiring greater learning against a future opportunity of accomplishment. But gold is appraised at its true value, when the *will* transforms it as the hand acquires it; and the ladder called learning will be a thousand times more precious to you, if you know to what heights it will take you. Follow your father's advice and aim *definitely.* To do so will lend power to your thoughts and deeds. The goal is straight ahead. You are unusually gifted, and your father a man of wealth. Why should not the Bishop's robe rest on your shoulders in due time?

LOFT. I thought such was your wish.

STEWARD. There are only two bishoprics in the country, but many ambitious fathers. You must, therefore, choose your weapons wisely and well. Build up a reputation abroad — a fair wind blows it hither — and it takes root where least expected. Benevolence is often blind, but it becometh those in high places. (*Sits.*) I shall tell you a story of one of the Bishops of the olden days. Once, on a journey, he was visited by three of God's almsmen. He had no coins to distribute among them, but he possessed a

precious goblet of silver. This he tossed to the floor, and by a miracle it broke into three equal parts. So he established his fame in Iceland. Take heed: he had naught else of value to give, but still he maintained his benevolent attitude. This shows the value of secrecy in private matters. Your gifts will be more highly valued, and no one who receives them will question *whence* your abundance. When you eventually have come into power cloak it in humility, and the people will believe your authority divine. My son, I have not yet mentioned the matter closest to my heart — and that is your choice of a wife. When the time comes, look to a noble family, for your wife becomes part of you, and her reputation falls on you, either as light or as shadow.

LOFT (*rising*). You need not fear.

STEWARD (*his voice changed*). A rumor has reached me. It entered like an icy draught through an open window. You are said to have made this choice. I name no names. But the maid is not your equal. (*Rises.*)

LOFT. Who told you this news?

STEWARD. I wish you to listen in silence; for you will either deceive me, or speak frankly; and I desire neither. I shall consider this as idle gossip. For a moment, my anger prevailed; I thought of exercising my authority. But remembering my own reactions to such methods, I thought better of it. I decided to let my anger hover over you like a threatening thunder-cloud; then I remembered your mother, of whose care you were deprived so young. Your grief for her made you of a tender disposition, the which I hold in your warm affection for Olaf. In him you found a noble soul. Now you seem to have misinterpreted your own emotions — or the young girl misunderstood them. My son, I do not upbraid you; but my grief waits mutely and hearkens at your door. (*Knocking.*)

STEWARD. Ay! (*Enter a group of men servants, huddled close, dripping.*)

STEWARD. Has any accident befallen?

YOUNG MAN. The river is rising rapidly.

STEWARD. Did you all return from the hayfield to tell me this?

YOUNG MAN. We thought that perhaps the Steward had not noticed the rain. For an hour or more we have been cutting hay, soaked to the skin. (*Pulls at shirt.*) The weather is unfit for a dog.

VOICE. Show the Steward your dripping shirt.

STEWARD (*observes them coldly. Sits*). I had the maids called home. But you are men, — and not ashamed! (*To the* YOUNG MAN.) Your father will be proud of you when he hears that you've complained about a light squall of rain. I can recall an evening when he came in from a blizzard. His beard was full of icicles and his whole face frost-bitten. Did he complain? (*Laughter.*) He laughed and remarked that it would be hard to find a girl who would kiss him. (*Indicates.*) And you, farthest back — just waiting to wring out your shirt, I remember how your mother was out in the hayfield, helping your father three days after you were born. (*Moment's pause.*) What are you waiting for? Get under cover and change your clothes. (*They leave in silence. Pool of water on the floor.*)

STEWARD (*watches them go. Turns to* LOFT). Will you close the door? There is yet another small matter of which I wished to speak. (LOFT *closes door.*)

STEWARD (*rising — goes toward* LOFT). Up to this time, you have not been in possession of money to any extent. That is not as it should be, for you will, some day, be a man of wealth. (*Goes to chest — opens it — lifts out a money-bag — lays it on the table.*) Take this. You can count it later — when I am gone. (LOFT *kisses his father.*)

STEWARD. Do not thank me. All that I am able to do for you is a source of happiness to me. (*Locks chest — returns key to drawer.*) I shall now consult the Bishop about your travels. (*Pause.*) If you wish to please your father, make certain of the love of a well-born maiden before you leave. I feel that you will know to whom I refer. When you return, it might be too late. In foreign lands, temptations may beset you. Against these nothing is more effective than the certainty that someone awaits you in utmost confidence. Should you settle down abroad, even though you might win both fame and honor, I should feel that I had lost you. (*Grasps his hand.*) My son, I admit that my

faith in you wavers at times, for no man have I ever known whom I believed deserving of immortality. But should fortune favor me, so that you may stand by my deathbed, I should feel that I was falling into repose in a kindly shade. (*Lays his hand on* LOFT'S *head. Goes out, closing the door behind him.*)

(LOFT *stands still a moment. Goes swiftly to the door as if to call his father back. Stops. Goes to escritoire. Loosens string from money-bag. Hears steps approaching and hides bag. Knock.*)

DISA (*enters, becomes shy seeing* LOFT *is alone*). Is your father here? I was sent to call him.

LOFT. He has just gone in to see your father. (*Walks past her to close the door, then comes back and takes hold of her hands.*) Disa, do you regret that you went with me to the wishing-well yesterday?

DISA. That I do not.

LOFT. Are you sure that the joy of home-coming did not mislead you?

DISA. Ay, very certain. The mountains seemed lower and the river smaller than my memory had pictured them; but *you* were unchanged.

LOFT (*his hands on her cheeks*). My playmate! My childhood friend! My love! (*Kisses her.*)

DISA. You make me shy—as though you were a prince.

LOFT (*kneels*). I kneel to youth and to innocence. I am not worthy of you. But I know that you can help me. (*Rises.*) It grieves me to think that my love might stain you. Doubt was ever alien to your eyes. Their light is a thanksgiving to life. But I — I am an assembly of fragments — of good and of evil.

DISA. I love you for what you are. Last night when I had retired to my old bed, I lay awake for a long time thinking. Then slowly my eyelids dropped — like heavy doors closing behind us.

LOFT (*quietly*). Of what were you thinking?

DISA (*seated on the bench*). I thought of you; of your only dark deed that I could remember: that you had once trapped a young bird and had locked it in the storehouse.

You confided in me, that in this way you would come into possession of a rare herb with magic powers.

LOFT. It was a young wagtail. The mother was supposed to bring a magical plant — and the lock would open.

DISA. I dared not confess it, but it was I who set the young bird free. Now I know; you could not be so cruel.

LOFT (*seated*). Not when you are with me. (*Takes her hand.*) Dear hand! Do you know that you are mine? I have so often watched your flitting movements — with needle and thread — like a small bird building its nest. (*Smiles.*) I forgive you all the snowballs you've thrown in my face. (*Laughs.*) And a slap on the cheek once upon a time!

DISA. You're teasing me!

LOFT. I remember how frightened you were. You dashed from the house like a little firebrand, across the home-field — and I did not catch you, until you were down by the river. (*Suddenly silent; with troubled thoughts.*)

DISA. You were kind — you saved me from a scolding.

LOFT (*on his feet*). I wish this day were done.

DISA (*rising*). Why do you wish for that?

LOFT (*evasive*). I have so many wishes. (*Goes to the window.*) I wish the weather were fair. It should not be raining, now that you are at home. Listen to it beating on the window pane.

DISA. I hadn't noticed the rain.

LOFT. Tomorrow the sun will shine. You will go looking for berries. The crow-berries have turned black. I shall join you and we shall be perfectly happy, because the sun shines and because we are together.

DISA (*leans against him and looks into his face*). Are we not perfectly happy now?

LOFT (*silent a moment*). Ay, that we are. (*Kisses her eyes.*) Once I believed that love was something apart from our thought-world. I believed it was an uncertain longing for sympathy — an intense thirst for joy. But I was far from the truth. (*Passes his hands lightly over her face.*) My love for you has changed my inner life completely. To

you I probably appear to be the very same person as yesterday. But this is not so. Yesterday I was filled with ambition. I wanted to knock at the door of the unknown and step across the threshold of darkness.

DISA (*in fear*). I don't understand you.

LOFT. No need to be afraid. (*Sits.*) You have brought about a cure. (DISA *sits.*) The lust for power which burned within me has died down. It now gives me a sense of joy to be an imperfect human being, compelled to exert all his strength to win each trifling victory. With my own hands I shall pave the road for you to travel — and bless each cobble-stone which taxed the strength of my arms.

DISA (*pause*). Loft.

LOFT (*kisses her hand*). There are certain herbs which may heal our wounded bodies. There must also be substances healing to the soul. Holy men, able to cure both soul and body, must have had this knowledge; yet unconsciously, for otherwise they would have imparted it to others. Think of a man able to release a miserable sinner from greed and lust, the fire of anger, and the darkness of hatred, just by laying a hand on his head. And able to impart it to others, that it might never be forgotten. (*Kneels, bowing his head.* DISA *strokes his hair. He rises — intense — with tears in his eyes.*) O wondrous revelation! Through love is the human hand rendered holy. (DISA *rises.* LOFT *raises her hand to his lips.*)

DISA. I love you. (*Kisses his hair. Knock.*)

(*Enter* STEINUNN *with bucket and cloth, dressed in working-garb. Sad-eyed. Observes the others a moment, then kneels to wipe up the pool of water.*)

DISA. My mother will wonder what has become of me. (*Smiles.*) She would like to have me sit by her all day long. (*Goes to the door.*)

LOFT. Are you going?

DISA. Ay. (*Pauses in the doorway, looks at* LOFT, *her eyes alight with joy. His eyes meet hers; then he looks aside.* DISA *goes out.* LOFT *looks at* STEINUNN. *Becomes sad. Goes to the window; stops there a moment with his back turned, then comes back to* STEINUNN.)

LOFT. I must speak with you.

STEINUNN (*rising*). It would be sweet to be as fair as the Bishop's daughter.

LOFT (*walking up stage*). Ay, she is fair. (*Becoming tactful.*) You, also, are fair.

STEINUNN. What do you wish to tell me?

LOFT. I had determined to speak with you today. If you had not come in, I should have looked for you. (STEINUNN *sets down the bucket. Sits.*)

LOFT (*sadly*). You have had reasons to believe that I loved you. You have sacrificed all for my sake. It grieves me, Steinunn, but I do not love you.

STEINUNN (*quiet*). I knew it.

LOFT. You have never made any demands upon me. You trusted me. If confidence alone could create love, I must surely have come to love you.

STEINUNN. Yesterday the realization came to me that you did not love me. But I hoped you would never tell me.

LOFT. This morning I did not seem to dread it. But seeing your face as you entered the room, I understood how grave was my offence. (*Goes to the window once more; stops still.*)

STEINUNN (*rises*). I should have kept my love for you a secret.

LOFT (*facing her*). Whatever else you may come to think of me, never doubt that I myself was convinced that I truly loved you.

STEINUNN (*coldly*). Are you in love with the Bishop's daughter?

LOFT. Can't we part without bitterness? Be generous to me, Steinunn, and forget what has passed between us.

STEINUNN (*takes hold of the back of a chair*). What has passed between us? You have taught me to find pleasure in wrongdoing. Fear surrounded me like a mist, but you and my happiness loomed larger. Your caresses were as an army against the voice of my conscience. When I thought of my mother, I blushed with shame, yet at the same moment I was ready to weep with joy. And now you ask me to forget.

LOFT. I intended no harm. I thought that I loved you.

STEINUNN. You thought you loved me. Did you not *know?*

LOFT. What could I know, beyond my thoughts? A man is not the master of his emotions.

STEINUNN. There are certain acts that intensify our emotions. You demanded all, without giving in return all that was in your power to give. You did not tell your father of your love for me. If you had been brave, your attitude would be different now.

LOFT. You do not try to understand that I am forced to keep it secret from my father.

STEINUNN. You must not fail me, Loft. I shall be a good wife to you. I shall be equally happy facing good fortune or ill. I sometimes fear you think me beneath you, and for that reason do not show your love. But acknowledge me openly and no other woman will carry her head so high. (*Takes a step forward.*) My every footfall will sing your praises.

LOFT. You're afraid that I may not think of you as my equal, and yet you love me.

STEINUNN. I have sacrificed so much that I cannot let you go. You *must* do the right thing by me, Loft. All my people are proud. I don't know whether I could bear it, if you betrayed me. The servants would gloat over my downfall — and pretend sympathy. I think it would kill me.

LOFT. The servants cannot feign sympathy for what is kept a secret.

STEINUNN. They know more than you guess. Servants are like jealousy — nothing escapes their eyes. I have tried to be friendly to all, but none have responded. The servants hate me.

LOFT. I thought you despised their opinion. I thought you different from the others.

STEINUNN. God is sometimes so remote, but human beings constantly sit in judgment. Have sympathy!

LOFT (*mournfully*). I have done ill by you. Forgive me, if you can. You cannot wish me to marry you out of pity? That could never bring you happiness.

STEINUNN. Do I look as though I were thinking of happiness?

LOFT (*toneless voice*). I shall be very frank with you. You may then draw your own conclusions. You asked me whether I loved the Bishop's daughter. My heart beat fast with joy at the mere sight of a poor little child wearing one of her girlhood dresses. When she entered this room yesterday . . . . . I was as one blind, a blindman to whom eyesight is suddenly restored!

STEINUNN (*bitter*). The Bishop's daughter is above me in wealth and station.

LOFT. Do you think me as contemptible as that?

STEINUNN. How may I know what you keep in hiding — back of your words? You hold them up before you like a shield. If you were noble-minded enough to regard the two of us as equals, your course would be clear. But your emotions are like drifting sand — borne hither today and thither tomorrow. Your house must be founded on your sense of duty and honor.

LOFT (*speaks low*). Would you choose to live with me all your life if I became greedy for power and of an evil mind? If I should sell my soul in order to gain mastery over the powers of darkness?

STEINUNN. What do you mean?

LOFT (*abstractedly*). We are but a shadow of reality. Reality consists of two forces, evil and good and the souls they have jointly created. Evil is closest to human beings, as the fire in the earth's interior is nearer at hand than that of the sun. Evil may reach its highest point, but the most sacred desire of any human being is the longing for that which is good. (*Sadly.*) From the moment I realized that I was bound to you, my whole mind inclined more and more to darkness.

STEINUNN. Do you lay this at my door, too?

LOFT. Nay, you are not to blame. I allowed myself to be tempted by a fair reflection in a flowing river.

STEINUNN. Am I a reflection in a mirror?

LOFT. It was not the memory of your soul that kept me awake at night.

STEINUNN. Have you ever inquired about my soul?

LOFT. You must believe me, Steinunn. Living togeth-

er throughout the years, we should become a torture to each other. We should both become evil.

STEINUNN (*grasping the truth*). Have you told the Bishop's daughter that you are in love with her?

LOFT (*silent a moment*). Ay!

STEINUNN (*icily*). Have you asked her to become your wife? (LOFT *turns away from her and walks toward the door. She intercepts him and guards the door.*)

STEINUNN. Are you going to run away?

LOFT. Go!

STEINUNN. Why not push me away from the door?

LOFT (*his brow dark and his eyes flashing with evil and half-concealed desires*). I wish you were dead! (*A look of terror comes over his face. Walks away from her; sits, covers his face with hands.*)

STEINUNN (*pauses at the door, then walks towards him*). Once you told me that I was proud. Do you think it is for your sake that I have laid aside my pride? (*Her lips tremble; her eyes dim with tears.*) You have seen a mother ptarmigan brushing the dusty footpath with her wings to protect her brood? Well, then, I am with child. (*Kneels, weeps audibly.*)

LOFT (*rising*). God help me! (STEINUNN'S *weeping becomes more quiet, yet bitter. The rain beats on the window panes.*)

LOFT (*has moved away from* STEINUNN. *Looks at her in pity.*) I wish you were a stranger, whom I might comfort.

STEINUNN (*weeping*). I have known this for some time, but could not bring myself to tell you. I have been waiting for the day when you would so dearly love me, that this would mean joy to both of us.

LOFT. We must be strong. We must not let fate get the upper hand. (*Suddenly loses patience.*) Stop this weeping! (STEINUNN *rises, controls herself; her look becomes cold and searching.*)

LOFT. Do any others know?

STEINUNN. Nay.

LOFT (*paces the floor; stops now and then. His voice becomes like his father's.*) You must stay away from here. In no other way can this be kept a secret. I shall speak to

my father later on today and ask his help. He must find a place for you. Only the three of us need ever know. When the child is born, I shall place it in good hands. My father has supplied me with money, so that I am independent. I promise that you need have no anxiety on account of the child. The main difficulty will be in leaving the place without attracting attention.

STEINUNN. Is that the main difficulty?

LOFT (*harshly*). Ay, it is the main difficulty! But we shall overcome that, also. When my father returns from his journey, I shall get him to say that a friend asked him to find a serving maid for the winter — and he will recommend you.

STEINUNN (*crafty*). Does it mean much to you that I go?

LOFT. You must go, both for my sake and your own.

STEINUNN. Let us leave me out. If I speak up, you will be expelled from the school, without mercy, even though you are the Steward's son. The Bishop deals alike with rich and poor; and the Bishop's Lady will be exacting, where you are concerned. All your future hopes will be shattered. Great will be your father's disappointment. Such things go hard with old people. (*Laughs.*) They may even die from the effects. You are his only son, and will be a disgrace to him. It will not be a light matter for the Bishop's daughter, either. She regards you as a man of noble character. There is no trial more bitter than to discover that he who has your whole mind and heart in his keeping, is a rascal. If I tell my secret, you not only lose her, but you poison her whole life besides.

LOFT. You hate me.

STEINUNN (*beside herself*). Through my soul my unborn child hates you.

LOFT (*after a pause*). What do you gain by ruining me? You ruin yourself at the same time. Is it for the sake of revenge?

STEINUNN (*more quiet*). I do not care to ruin you. Find a priest to perform the marriage ceremony in secret — you or your father. When I have become your lawful wife, I shall go wheresoever it pleases you.

LOFT. Would you force me to marry you by threats?

STEINUNN. The scriptures say that a man's wife must be submissive — but no such reference is made to his mistress.

LOFT. Up to this moment I have pitied you; now I have no more feeling for you.

STEINUNN. I am not concerned with your feelings any more. I am appealing to your reason. Remember that now my wealth is greater than yours. Your honor and your future hopes are my dowry.

LOFT. Though all the wealth of this bishopric were yours, you shall never become my wife. (*Turns away from her.*)

STEINUNN (*follows him*). My first-born shall not be a fatherless outcast. I think that your father will agree with me. I think he will deem it your duty to acknowledge it. For I do not imagine you will deny that you are its father.

LOFT. That I do not deny. (*Sits.*)

STEINUNN (*takes a deep breath*). I shall wait for you as many years as you wish. And when you, in due time, return from abroad, you will be admired for marrying the sweetheart of your youth — a penniless maid.

LOFT (*self-possessed once more*). My conscience tells me that I should throw away all my hopes of happiness and do my duty. (*Rising.*) But I cannot do it! I will not do it! Moreover, I doubt that my conscience speaks the truth. You called me a rascal. All others will agree. I fear it not! It is in your power to ruin me, but not to hinder me from living my life and working in solitude — and preserving in my soul my purest and holiest memories.

STEINUNN. Do you forget the child completely?

LOFT. I have promised to place it in good hands — where it will be given more real affection than it would ever receive from me.

STEINUNN. Do you know how much affection strangers show a little child brought up for a small remuneration? What if they were evil persons and brought it up to be a criminal?

LOFT. The responsibility would be theirs, not mine . . .

that is, if such responsibility rests with human beings, and not elsewhere.

STEINUNN (*moves away from him*). You may betray me; you may wipe me out of your memory; but you cannot take the child away from me. (*Faces him.*) I shall bring it up to hate. I may not be able to disturb your solitude, but I may be able to enrich it with evil dreams. On the day of judgment, you shall meet a face exactly like your own, but distorted by sin and desire. That face shall demand of you its soul!

LOFT (*hoarsely*). If you are such a monster that you can bring up a child in hatred — do so! No threat of yours shall compel me to bind myself for life to a woman I hate.

STEINUNN. That you hate! (*In desperation.*) Yesterday you said my working-garb became me best. I presume you meant that a worthless jewel deserved but a common setting. It was a plain setting in which you first saw me.

LOFT (*staring*). What does this mean?

STEINUNN. Hereafter I shall belong to any man who will deign to look at me. All! Any one but you! (*Tears off her bodice and tosses it aside, revealing a white blouse.*)

LOFT (*with intense emotion*). You lie! (*Grasps her arm.*) You love no one but me! (STEINUNN *stands motionless.* LOFT *lets go of her arm, turns away from her and with bowed head goes out.*)

(STEINUNN, *dazed for a moment, picks up her bodice and slips it on. Sinks down on the bench; puts her hands to her cheeks and rocks back and forth wailing.* OLAF *enters; seeing* STEINUNN, *he pauses in the doorway, then goes up to her. His voice is friendly and sympathetic.*)

OLAF. Are you ill?

STEINUNN (*looks up. Lowers her hands.*) Leave me in peace. Ay, I am ill. (*Sits dazed.*)

OLAF (*looks at her; understands her grief. Brings a chair to her side and takes her hand.*) Let me speak with you as though I were your friend.

STEINUNN (*pulls her hand slowly away from him.*) I have no friend.

OLAF (*searching for words*). One is often lonely in a crowd. It is my fault that you came here. You did not know many people before you came here, but those whom you knew were your friends. (*Gets up suddenly.*) I cannot bear to see you suffer so. (*Takes a few steps away from her.*) Can you not live without him?

STEINUNN (*looks up. She is beside herself — it is as though she were listening for something. Brief silence.*)

OLAF (*goes up to her and bends over her*). I have also known despair, otherwise I should not dare break in upon your grief. (*Sits down beside her.*) Let me be to you as a brother. Anyone suffering such mental anguish must confide in another. Without that relief, life becomes unbearable. I knew a person who lost faith in God and man — it was my mother. When I was still a child, she made me her confidant. (*Calm.*) I know the cause of your sorrow.

STEINUNN (*thoughtful*). What do you know?

OLAF (*rises, but dares not look at her*). For years I loved a maiden. She chose another. I do not think it possible that you have loved Loft more than I have loved her. (*Looks at her.*)

STEINUNN (*suspicious*). Has Loft told you anything about me?

OLAF (*disappointment saddens his looks; he moves away from her. Speaks coldly.*) I questioned him. I had a right to question him. (*Moves farther away.*)

STEINUNN (*eyes blazing, but voice controlled*). Did he tell you when it was that he noticed me for the first time?

OLAF. That I do not know. That I do not remember.

STEINUNN (*sighs deeply. Rises. Goes to the window and is still. Whispers in a daze.*) "Can you not live without him?" (*Facing* OLAF.) Why do you ask me the same question over again?

OLAF (*in fear and surprise*). What have I asked you?

STEINUNN (*understands that* OLAF's *question*: "*Can you not live without him?*" *is echoing in her own soul. Goes to him.*) You must be patient with me a while. (*Goes to the bench.*) Do not leave me. (*Sits.*)

OLAF. I shall not leave you. (*Goes toward her.*)

STEINUNN (*mournfully*). I know that hereafter he will

think of me only with contempt. I could not bear to lose him. I threatened to become an inhuman being.

OLAF (*intense*). Loft deserves neither your love nor your despair. He plunges headlong into idle dreaming and forgets life itself.

STEINUNN (*still mournful*). Why was I not his sister? A sister loves her brother unselfishly. I should have filled his room with flowers. Now I am merely a burden to him. (*Rises. Appears to answer a question eagerly.*) No, I cannot do it.

OLAF. What can you not do?

STEINUNN (*silent a moment*). I cannot speak with him any more for I know that either hatred or love would blind me. (*Pause.*)

OLAF (*studies her, debating with himself; moves closer, wishing to speak to her.*) Steinunn! My Steinunn!

STEINUNN (*facing him. Voice and looks have changed.*) When the hawk strikes at the heart of the ptarmigan,* he wails, for he realizes it is his sister. He shall wail!

OLAF. What do you mean?

STEINUNN (*more composed*). A man and a woman must be able to wound each other so deeply that they realize they are brother and sister. (*Goes quietly to the door.*)

OLAF (*follows her with fixed purpose*). Do not go at once. (*She pauses.*) I ask you a second time to allow me to be your brother. Let me talk with Loft — you say you cannot do so, yourself. What shall I tell him?

STEINUNN (*after a pause; supremely calm in looks and voice.*) Tell him that all bitter feelings have left my heart. Tell him that I forgive him. Will you do that?

OLAF. I will do all that you ask me to do.

(STEINUNN *takes his hand and holds it a long while, then bends over it and touches it with her lips. Goes out very composed.* OLAF *stands still a moment; looks at his hand, raises it to his lips. Goes out.*

*Icelandic tradition has it that the hawk, which preys upon the ptarmigan, utters a terrifying cry at just that point in devouring his prey, and for the reason here stated.

Stage is empty. Loft *enters excitedly. Goes to the large chest, opens it, tosses the money-bag carelessly into it and locks it. Goes to the bookshelf — picks out a volume. Sits. Opens the book. Chances upon the 11th Canto of the Odyssey. Covers his ears with his hands, reading aloud, to quiet his thoughts.*)

Loft. "Still in the dark abodes of death I stood,
When near Anticlea moved and drank the blood.
Straight all the mother in her soul awakes,
And, owning her Ulysses, thus she speaks:
'Comest thou, my son, alive, to realms beneath
The dolesome realms of darkness and of death?
Comest thou alive from pure ethereal day?
Dire is the region, dismal is the way.' "

(*Rises.*) Not so. (*Tosses away the book. Paces the floor with clasped hands, his face shadowed by evil thought. Pauses; speaking low.*) He who with all his soul wishes death to another person . . . (*silent. Walks the floor. Pauses. Expression dark and powerful; voice strong.*) He who with all his soul wishes death to another person, shall bow his head and look earthward, (*lifts his head slowly, then bows, kneels, and then repeats.*) "Thou who dwellest in eternal darkness! Make thy will my will! Kill the person! I swear in the name of the mighty three: in the name of the son which is the shadow of the Lord; in the name of subterranean fire, which is thy shadow, and in the name of my body, which is *my* shadow, that my soul is thine, forever and ever." (*He has remained perfectly still while pronouncing the imprecation, and pointed all his willpower to serve his hatred. But as he repeats the last words, his strength leaves him. Overpowering anguish shows in his expression. He repeats with trembling lips as he rises: "that my soul is thine forever and ever." He is then overcome with weeping. Sinks into a chair and buries his face in his arms outstretched on the table — shaken with heavy sobs.*)

Curtain.

ACT III

The church at Hólar. Night. Moonlight. The church is empty. Dead silence. Light falls through a window at the right. Clouds move across the face of the moon. Shadows creep over the gravestones and slabs in the floor, the backs of chairs at the left and the large Christ-image. They fill the church with a mysterious presence. A key is turned. A heavy door creaks on its hinges, — the pulpit hides the door. DISA *enters. Bows and crosses herself in front of the small Christ-image, which hangs over the altar.* LOFT enters. *His face shows mental anguish and loss of sleep.* DISA *comes down the steps. Bows again and makes the sign of the cross, in front of the large Christ-image.*

DISA. Merciful Saviour, forgive thou my sin.

LOFT (*coming down the steps*). Do *you* speak of sin?

DISA. I was very young when my father first gave me permission to carry the church-key. He wished to show me that he placed confidence in me. Now I have taken the key without his knowledge. I feel as though I had stolen it.

LOFT. It was for my sake that you did it.

DISA. I promised to do your bidding, without knowing what you were going to ask. I could not imagine you would ask me to do anything dishonorable.

LOFT (*his expression grows more and more uneasy. Apprehension in his voice*). The quivering moonbeams animate things so strangely. (*Points at the floor.*) See! Is this not like ice-floes in a dark river? It must be *cold* — *drowning.*

DISA. Poor Steinunn.

LOFT (*suspecting*). Why do you mention her?

DISA. Do you not fear for her soul? Olaf declares he saw the storm hurl her into the river, but he may have been mistaken. (LOFT *remains silent.*) My father says it is not ours to sit in judgment. But my mother thinks she took her own life. Is it not terrible? (*Looks at* LOFT.) And no one knows the reason.

LOFT (*pointing*). There, in the deepest shadow, stood her coffin this morning. (*Pointing.*) What is that — there? Is it blood?

DISA. Blood? It is a spray of heather which dropped from the coffin.

LOFT (*looks up at the Christ-image*). He suffered only for the sins of others. He should have sinned, himself. (*Sits, inert, on one of the steps.*)

DISA. You have not told me yet why you felt compelled to come here at dead of night. Are you here to pray? (LOFT *is silent.*) Why do you not answer me?

LOFT (*looking up*). Would you be willing to suffer for sins of mine?

DISA. You have suffered some misfortune which I do not understand. (*Moves closer.*) Do you love me, Loft?

LOFT. Your innocence is a rainbow which may lead me to heaven.

DISA. Merely say: Ay!

LOFT. Ay! Ay! That you know. (*Rises.*)

DISA. If you love me, then you will tell me what causes your anguish?

LOFT. You are so good at heart. (*Takes hold of her hands.*) Once, last season, I went down to the seashore. On the previous day there had been a gale from the north. A soft breath of spring wafted rainbow-shades over the surf as if trying to soothe it. Your voice is soft as the breath of spring. (*Lets go of her hands.*) But the breath of spring lacks power against breakers rolling in from the open sea.

DISA. You treat me like a child. I am no longer a child. (*Sits.*)

LOFT. I cannot tell you the cause of my suffering because it is best for you not to know. Knowledge and innocence cannot go hand in hand.

DISA. Did she love you?

LOFT (*after a pause*). How can I know?

DISA. You fear that you are the cause of her death?

LOFT. Who suggested that?

DISA (*rising*). You yourself. (*Her question is direct and cannot be evaded.*) Were you engaged? And did you break with her on my account?

LOFT (*harshly*). Nay, that we were not.

DISA. Why have you been like a different person since her drowning?

LOFT. I have already told you that I cannot tell you the cause of my anguish. Now go you home, my love, and leave me alone. (*Kisses her forehead.*) Tonight my great wish will be fulfilled.

DISA. What do you intend to do? (*Seized by fear.*) Some sinister forces have laid hold of you. I see it in your looks.

LOFT. Go, Disa.

DISA (*looking at the Christ-image*). Let us both kneel before the image of the Saviour and pray to him for help.

LOFT. I cannot pray.

DISA. I cannot leave you in your despair. We must, like Jacob, wrestle with the Lord, until He hears our prayer.

LOFT. My *will* is ready to break down the doors of the unknown. The welfare of my soul hangs in the balance. Do not discourage me.

DISA. You will not listen to me. You push me away from you. I know a voice more compelling than my own. (*Walks swiftly down stage; disappears between the pews.*)

LOFT. Where are you going? (*Follows a few steps. Stops. Luther's superb hymn, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," sounds softly and appealingly through the church*)

LOFT (*looks up. Waves it off with his hand.*) Nay! Nay! (LOFT *pauses. A tremor passes through him. Kneels, with folded hands. After each sentence he pauses. His words sound clear above the organ music.*)

Hast Thou forever forsaken the humblest among Thy servants?

The fragrant breath of Thy Holy Spirit no longer touches mine eyelids, that I may find peace in sleep.

All my cries are carried back to me by a derisive echo, as if Thy heaven were a vault of stone.

Didst Thou not give me the power to sin, because Thou wast resolved to forgive me?

Whence came the power which made my sin greater than Thy mercy?

Lord! — Lord! — Grant me but for one moment Thy peace! (*Lifts his face, with closed eyes, and hands clasped. Kneels in silence. The music stops.* DISA *comes hurriedly*

between pews. Her face is illumined with peace and joy. Moves swiftly to LOFT'S *side and kneels.*)

DISA. I knew it! I knew it!

LOFT (*bows his head*). God has forsaken me. He hears not my prayers. (*Rises.*)

DISA (*rising. Stands; at a loss*). What have you done that leaves you in such despair?

LOFT (*faces her, but speaks partly to himself*). I understand it. He cannot forgive me. In the eternal strife between good and evil, there are moments when our *will* must stand alone.

DISA. Even though you have committed a sin which rests heavily on your conscience, you must not despair. I have heard my father say that despair is the greatest sin of all. To despair is to doubt the omnipotence of God. He who repents with his whole heart receives forgiveness of his sin.

LOFT. I cannot repent. Could I repent, I should even now stand in the comforting shade of forgiveness. For me there is only one way open. I must penetrate farther into the dark. I must gain so much knowledge that the forces of evil obey my will. If I am then able to resist the temptation to wish anything for self-gratification, I shall receive forgiveness in death.

DISA. You frighten me more and more.

LOFT (*approaching madness*). When I make evil forces my servants to accomplish that which is good, what then is good and what is evil?

DISA. Dear, dearest Loft!

LOFT. I have ventured too far to be able to turn back. Tonight I must win this victory. I shall cry out until he who is dead rises from his grave and bestows upon me this power.

DISA. You are ill.

LOFT (*seized by uncontrollable fear*). You must not betray me. (*Kneels and holds her hand.*) Without you I cannot hope to be saved. If I lost you, I should become cruel beyond control.

DISA. Can you think that I shall ever betray you? I would leave my father and mother to follow you. (*Strokes*

his head.) Loft, I felt so lonely, the year I spent with strangers. They so seldom found joy in the same things as I. My happiest moments were when I found a flower you had taught me to recognize. Then I thought you were close by me, even if the mountains lay between us. And when I carried flowers into my room, an eager longing for home gripped me.

LOFT (*rises. Strokes her hands*). Through your hands turbid water would run clear. With you standing beside me, I can resist the temptation of power. (*Lets go of her.*) If we should lose our grip, we can live together through good and ill, according to our own intuitions. I require unlimited power. I can prolong life. And I can change our shapes into animal or flower forms. If you wish, we can live as long as this earth endures. (*Draws her closer.*) We shall be two flowers in a lonely place high up on the mountains, where the kiss of the sun never leaves the rosy petals until the autumn wind scatters them over the sands. (*Kisses her forehead. They have unconsciously taken a position similar to that on the flying-carpet in Act I.*) And then we shall both fly wheresoe'er we wish — in the shape of birds, but with a soul in our eyes.

DISA. Dear Loft, come home with me now.

LOFT (*in deep thought*). Possibly I may in this way also gain peace. Possibly good and evil had in the beginning of time but one fountain-head and the two streams may again unite.

DISA (*baffled*). I shall go home and call my father and tell him of our love. Come with me, Loft!

LOFT. Go without fear. (*Voice more confident.*) I must be alone. I shall come when the victory is won. (*Footfall is heard.* DISA *and* LOFT *listen involuntarily.*)

DISA. It is father.

OLAF (*entering*). So you are here. I searched for you in vain at the house. (*With penetrating look.*)

LOFT. What do you wish?

DISA. Beg him to come home with us.

OLAF (*to* DISA). Why are you both out here at dead of night? Do you practice music at this hour?

DISA. Nay.

LOFT. What is your errand here?

OLAF. It is best for you to go home, Disa. You are still but a child. I do not wish to darken the outlook of your soul. You are here, doubtless, without your father's permission.

DISA (*moving closer to* LOFT). We have agreed to tell my father of our betrothal.

OLAF (*flinches; turns on* LOFT). Is this true?

LOFT. Does that make any difference to you?

DISA (*uneasy*). Why do you speak so angrily to each other? You, who are old friends. (*Tries to smile.*) Do you not wish us happiness?

OLAF. It grieves me so deeply because of your innocence, Disa, but you must hear the truth. Loft has been the friend of my bosom. Now I wish only to obliterate him from my memory. I have no wish to spend another day under the same roof. Tomorrow, when the Steward returns, I shall demand my release from service here at once and leave forever. I do not want to breathe the same air. I do not want to look on the same mountains! (*To* LOFT.) Heaven forbid that you ever cross my path again!

DISA. Of what is Loft guilty, to deserve this?

OLAF (*to* LOFT, *controlling himself*). I have a message for you from Steinunn, which I promised to deliver. I met her in your father's waiting-room the day she was drowned. Never have I seen such heartrending despair. But she seemed more composed after talking with me awhile. I, poor fool, did not at once grasp the whole situation.

LOFT. Keep the message until morning. I shall be ready to receive it then. Not now.

OLAF. You shall hear the message now! (*Proceeds with his story.*) Immediately after she left the waiting-room, I saw her run across the homefield, bareheaded, a shawl around her shoulders. Then I understood. I ran after her. I shouted. (*Sadly.*) It may be that my shouting helped to drive her on toward her death; for when she heard me calling her, she tossed the shawl away and hurried on. For a second she hesitated on the river-bank. When I reached the river, the current had caught her, and it was

beyond human power to save her. (*Looks at* Loft *in a rage.*) It was your fault that she drowned herself!

Disa (*to* Loft. *Voice thick with fear*). Is this true?

Loft. Have no fear, Disa. (*Voice firm.*) Steinunn did not drown herself. Olaf hated me, because he was in love with her and is trying to terrorize my conscience. He has himself declared that she left her shawl in the hayfield and went out to fetch it; and that he saw how the storm overpowered her until she lost her footing on the river-bank.

Olaf. Do you think I was going to let them bury the woman I loved outside the church-yard? Think of her mother. Was it not enough to lose her daughter, without the added fear for the safety of her soul? When I ran home for help, I was beside myself with grief and hatred; but on the way back, I came to my senses. And when I found her shawl, I thought of this way of concealing her unfortunate deed, brought about by an overwhelming despair. Now that she rests in her grave, I can tell the truth.

Disa (*to* Loft). You told me you were not betrothed to Steinunn.

Olaf (*to* Loft). Then you lied.

Loft. I forbid you to speak!

Olaf. Can you silence your conscience?

Loft. Do not listen to him, Disa. I would rather tell you myself. Ay, it is true. I was betrothed to Steinunn. (*Moves closer to* Disa.)

Disa (*moves away*). You had no more confidence in me? You lied to me.

Loft. Nay, you must not forsake me. To you alone belongs all my love. I should reel and plunge into a fathomless abyss, if I lost you.

Disa (*grief-stricken*). How may I know if this be true?

Loft. Can you not love me even though I am guilty of sin? He who never commits sin, is not human. (*Madness grips him. Deceit and arrogance blend in his persuasions.*) Disa, there is a mysterious joy in sin. All charitable deeds are irresponsible imitations. In sin, a man becomes his

real self. Sin is the beginning of all that is new. Through immeasurable anguish a man is reborn.

DISA. I realized awhile back that you were ill. Olaf, I shall now go for my father. (*Goes out hurriedly.* LOFT *starts after her.*)

LOFT. Disa! (*She does not look back.* LOFT *turns to* OLAF.) The devil sent you here. Her innocence was the only thing that might have saved me.

OLAF. It cost you no effort to abandon the girl you betrayed. Now you will drain the same cup yourself.

LOFT. Go!

OLAF. Ay, indeed I shall go. But first I shall keep my promise to Steinunn and give you her last message, though I consider you unworthy of receiving it. She bade me tell you that all bitter feelings had left her heart. She bade me tell you she had forgiven you.

LOFT. It was not in her power to forgive me.

OLAF. Is your conscience waking up?

LOFT. You believe that Steinunn took her own life? Nay, it was I who killed her. My wish was in the storm. My wish carried her feet onward as she ran — and when she lost her footing on the river-bank, my wish was in the current which caught her and carried her away! I have sold my soul!

OLAF (*has watched him closely and realized his state. Lays a hand on his shoulder.*) Disa will soon be here with her father.

LOFT (*suddenly overjoyed; takes* OLAF's *face between his hands*). You were with me out in the moorlands when I found the Highland Buttercup. In you I can confide to the utmost. Tonight I shall conquer. My incantations shall arouse Gottshalk the Terrible from his grave and shall force him to deliver into my hands the Book of Might. (*In fear.*) I know the good bishops will also appear. They will not tolerate imprecations in the house of God.

OLAF. Try to be calm. Remember that Steinunn has forgiven you.

LOFT (*turning away from him*). God Almighty has not the power to forgive me.

OLAF (*follows him*). You cannot ask forgiveness of

God, for of Him you know nothing beyond hearsay or dreams. You must forgive yourself. If this is beyond your power, you must await your death. Loft! I have heard death speaking. It was not Steinunn who forgave you; it was death.

LOFT. Forgiveness from a good source brings peace. (*Voice and expression powerful.*) But forgiveness from an evil source brings hardness of heart. Why should I not give myself up to wickedness? When I come into power, I shall use it like a lash. I shall entice and force men to sin, that they may know the torture I have endured. (*Mounts the steps, pauses, looks askance at the door.*)

OLAF (*follows up the steps*). Unfortunate man! (*Pauses.*) I realize that you no longer understand my words — but now I forgive you. I forgive you, in the name of the sunbeam which once touched my hand.

LOFT (*faces him, his eyes heavy and terrifying*). Now go!

OLAF. Ay, now we shall both go. (LOFT *seizes him by the shoulder, and with the fearful strength of the madness upon him, pushes him towards the door. The pulpit hides the struggle which follows, but the noise is heard and then the door creaks on its hinges. The key is turned.*)

LOFT (*enters, with jacket torn open, walks to the altar-rail, his back to the altar, head bowed deeply.*)

LOFT. Thou who dwellest in the eternal darkness. I pierce the earth with my cry of thee. (*The church grows dark. He has gone mad.*)

Grant me thy power.

Clothe me in thy strength.

Cleanse me of all charitable deeds.

Render my heart mighty in evil. (*A flash of lightning passes through the church. The candles flare up.* GOTTSHALK *the* TERRIBLE *appears in the pulpit, robed in red chasuble slightly stooped, holding the Red Parchment — the Book of Might — in outstretched hands. The cold majesty of death rests on his brow. On both sides, at the backs of the pews appear bishops, fully robed in violet chasubles with crosses of gold. All wear mitres. They re-*

main as still as statues, speaking in turn. They represent the voice of conscience.

VOICE OF CONSCIENCE.

1st Voice

Who art thou that defilest this holy place with the madness of thy desires?

2nd Voice

Thou rebellest against the Almighty, who sendeth the least among his servants, the worms, against thee.

3rd Voice

When the river of death breaketh in upon thine house, the cloak of arrogance shall fall away from thee like dust.

LOFT (*advances swiftly towards the last "voice"*). I am a spark from the fire of omnipotence.

4th Voice

Lights esteem darkness, for in darkness they shine.

5th Voice

Thou art no closer to heaven, though thou climb to a mountain top. But the stars are reflected in humble waters.

LOFT (*approaching last "voice"*). The bow which dispatches the arrow knows no humility.

6th Voice

Flame is smothered in ashes and dreams depart from the proud of heart.

7th Voice

Even the seed, borne by the wind, recognizes its good.

LOFT. God knows the seed and the wind and hears the prayers of the grass under the snow. But what is that to me? My prayers he doth not hear.

8th Voice

Darkness and shadows live by the grace of light until the gold-seamed curtain of heaven shall be drawn aside.

LOFT. Be silent! Be silent! (*Bows as before.*) Grant me thy power. Clothe me in thy strength. Cleanse me of all charitable deeds.

ALL VOICES. Woe! Woe! Woe!

GOTTSHALK (*cold voice*). In the darkness . . . (LOFT *stops when aware of* GOTTSHALK. *Looks toward him.*)

GOTTSHALK (*continuing*). Before thou wert born, thy will was broken by evil.

LOFT (*Beside himself with joy, reaches for the Book*). At last! (*Plunges forward and dies. The lights go out. The vision fades. The church is empty as before. Moonlight and shadows fill it with a mysterious presence. A moment later the door is suddenly opened.*)

DISA (*her voice barely audible*). Loft! Loft! (*Runs to him and kneels. The* BISHOP *and* OLAF *follow.*)

DISA (*in despair*). Loft! (*Raises his head and looks at his face in mute terror.*)

OLAF (*calm*). He is dead.

DISA LOFT! (*Throws herself on him, sobbing.*)

BISHOP. Is he dead? (*Goes up and bows over* LOFT *and* DISA.) Peace be with your soul. My child! My child! How deeply you must have loved him.

OLAF (*has remained perfectly still*). Death has forgiven him.

CURTAIN.

• • •

JOHANN SIGURJONSSON

(1880 - 1919)

Jóhann Sigurjónsson was born in Iceland, June 19, 1880. His father was a prosperous farmer on the north coast, and Johann was the youngest of a large family. He received his preliminary education in Iceland, then entered the University of Copenhagen. Before graduating from there, he launched upon his career of creative writing, choosing the drama as his chief mode of expression, although he also wrote some excellent lyric poetry.

For twenty years he made his home in Copenhagen, and died there in August, 1919. He was married to a woman of Danish birth, now deceased. They left no children.

Sigurjónsson belongs to the group of Icelandic authors who write principally in the Danish language, in order to reach a larger public. In America, the best known member of this group is Gunnar Gunnarsson, author of *Ships in the Sky,* etc. Sigurjónsson's themes are Icelandic and he translated some of his plays into Icelandic from his own Danish.

His first play, *Dr. Rung,* was published in 1903. He sent it to Björstjerne Björnson, who admired it, and called the attention of Gyldendal, well known Danish publisher, to the young writer. This play has not been produced, nor translated into Icelandic.

In 1908 the second play, *Hraun Farm,* was published. The author sent an Icelandic version to the Theatre Group in Reykjavik, and there it was produced for the first time, December 26, 1908. Later it was also produced in Copenhagen. These two plays, however, are considered to possess more literary than dramatic interest.

Three years later, Jóhann Sigurjónsson suddenly found himself a famous author. His drama, *Eyvind of the Hills,* was published in Copenhagen in 1911. He sent an Icelandic version to Reykjavik, where its first performance took place December 26 of that year. It was shown twenty - two times during the winter season, and also published in Reykjavik. In April, 1912, it was produced at the Dagmar Theatre in Copenhagen, and was received with great acclaim. *Det Nye*

Nord, September 3, 1911, says of this drama: "It ranks with the world's greatest tragedies, and will be remembered as long as northern literature is read, making illustrious the name of Jóhann Sigurjónsson." An English translation by Henninge Krohn Schanche was published by the American Scandinavian Foundation, in *Scandinavian Classics,* Vol. VI, together with *Hraun Farm.* This drama has been produced in Norway, Sweden, Germany, England, and America; also in Winnipeg, Canada, in Icelandic as well as in English. In Sweden it has been filmed and published with illustrations from the film.

In 1914 came *The Wish.* Sigurjónsson once more sent his Icelandic version to Reykjavik, calling it *Loft the Sorcerer.* There the first performance of this drama took place December 26, 1914. The title role was by some pronounced the most difficult one ever undertaken by the Reykjavik Theatre Group.

The Wish, or *Loft the Sorcerer,* was published simultaneously in Denmark and Iceland, in 1915. It was produced at the Dagmar Theatre, Copenhagen, and in Stockholm, Sweden, about that time. A few years ago, it was again produced in Copenhagen. A dramatic critic writing for the Danish newspaper *Poletiken* at the time pronounced *The Wish* a greater drama than *Eyvind of the Hills,* although it was through the latter that the author achieved fame.

Sigurjónsson's last play, *The Liar* — Icelandic title *Mord Valgardsson* — was published by Gyldendal in 1917. The theme is from the famous Icelandic saga, *Njala* — English title, *Burnt Njal.* It has been performed at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, but not in Iceland to date, as it requires a large stage and costly equipment.

From the above it may be seen that Icelandic folk-lore and saga supply the themes for Sigurjónsson's most noted works. *Eyvind* and *Loft* are both traditional figures, mentioned in the widely-known collection of Icelandic folk-stories compiled by Jón Arnason, published in Leipzig, 1863. But the dramatist touches them with the magic wand of poetic imagination, until little remains of the original, except the name and the setting. And through his treatment these traditional figures become deeply symbolical.

Loft was one of a group of young students in the School of Hólar, in the early years of the eighteenth century. The two Bishop's seats in Iceland maintained such schools, — Hólar in the north and Skálholt in the south. Loft, together with some others, began secretly delving into witchcraft, and soon gained a reputation for his magic powers. The accepted theory of that period was that, unless he gained knowledge of the subject sufficiently deep to become *master* of the evil forces, anyone practising witchcraft or sorcery was contacting powerful evil forces, and his soul was doomed to perdition when he died. This must be borne in mind in order to understand both Loft's *suffering* and Loft's *ambition.* The Bishop Gottshalk, who died about 1520, was master of witchcraft and recorded his secrets in his Book of Magic, which he ordered buried along with his body, so jealously did he guard it. It is Loft's ambition to compel the notorious old Bishop to yield up this book, master its contents, and then use his magic power for good. Making the supreme effort, he dies. The folk-story contains the suggestion for the calling forth of the dead Bishops, but not noticeably for any other scene in the play.

• • •

SPRING SONG

By Lucy A. K. Adee

Plum blossoms,
Cherry blossoms,
Blossoms of white,
Your coming brings me
Purest delight —

Cherry blossoms,
Plum blossoms,
Blossoms of snow,
I love you dearly
Why must you go?

SEVEN SONGS

By Randolph Shaffer, Jr.

THE FOOT OF A MADMAN

The second sequence (first in period of time) of seven songs from the minor fragments of Sappho, transcribed according to the Edmonds Text.

I.

Rain

Irrevocably
the moon is gone
and the seven sisters
have long since
concealed themselves
against a newer night.

There is a sound
of water falling
on these old branches
of the apple-tree
and from the fresh, still-fragrant leaves
sleep and an unremembering
drips down for all
upon the earth,
drips down for all excepting only
I who lie here in this center of the night
remembering . . .

Thinking how once
we used to live
in the days when
you loved my songs the best.
In that time
you were like a golden ring
to me (for gold is pure of rust)
and you encompassed
my heart with your beauty
as the night is encircled
with stars.

Even now someone waits
within the grove
but not for me.
I no longer wear
the ring of your regard
and in this eternity of darkness
I alone of all things
have no appointment.

II.

Even As The Amaranth

I am disquieted.
Those to whom I have been kind
malign me more than any other.
I know that in this world
man cannot have the best
yet I dreamed of thee last night, O Cyprus born,
and found thee more bitter . . .

It grieves me
and I am altogether undone
that in your swelling pride
I have become a reproach to you
and that you secretly exult
in injuring me.

None the less my love for you
is as the hyacinth flowering on the hill
that trampled by the shepherd underfoot
blooms yet purple on the ground
the more poignant for its mutilation
still with no shame, all-enduring, and without regret.

III.

Wormwood

It is humiliating
the manner in which
you degrade yourself
now that you are gone from me.

Foolish girl, what
bucolic wench is this,
sour with sweat in countrified clothes,
who inflames you
although she does not know
how to lift her gown over her ankles
and is unlearned
in the first principles of passion?
Surely, it were better to give thyself free
to all comers for the asking
than to so perpetuate this travesty of our desire
with such an uncouth proselyte.

I cannot conceive of you, Mnasidice,
who are as fragile as a poppy plant,
and whom of the maidens
have no rival in your art
opening to this slut
all chambers of the house
that formerly was mine.

And once again shall be.
But I tell you
until you return
my mind is like the foot of a madman
forever moving
without purpose or design
and fruitlessly.

IV.
By This Ritual

Lay aside your fear
as a discarded garment
unworthy of your womanhood
and come with me
into the morning.

Day is at hand
and I would lead you
along hidden paths

into the secret places
and there disclose
things due and all - desirable
of which no man
shall ever know.

Do not be hesitant
for I take none
who come reluctantly
and that which
you receive from me
is not a gift of apathy.

Nor am I vicious in spirit
but am of the pure in heart
and towards you, dear maiden,
this mind of mine
will never change.
My thought of you
is ever that of a mother
for her children
and as a woman cherishes
those memorials of pain
so will I preserve
a record of your beauty
When Time is dead.

V.

There In Wooded Valleys

Oh, sing, sing us the praise
of her of the flower - scented breasts.

For ultimately you are come unto me
and looking on you
in your motley gown,
a bright Lydian work
mingled with all manner of colors,
I am confounded by your willingness.

Rest here a little while
and I will set you reclining
on soft cushions
and give you garlands of white reeds and the majoram.
Yes, rest but a little while
on these new cushions
and the young men
will harness horses to the chariots
and we shall drive together to the heights
and down the high hills
beyond which nothing
can be seen
and only glory known.

(Oh, tell me whom
in all the world
do you love better than me?)

VI.

Epithalamium

To others you seem merely
a fair maiden
who lives with me
and whom, perhaps,
I have corrupted.

But you are to me
as a new temple constructed
of white marble
on a high place
and surrounded by the sea
for I hold you sacred
past the rites at Tarsus
and as inviolate as truth.

Yea, and in my piety
many are the golden bracelets, Anactoria,
and the scarlet robes
and without number also

are the silver goblets
and the ornaments of ivory
which I have offered up
before your shrine where many worship
but where I alone
have been instructed in the mysteries.

VII.

Discard Persephone

As for him who blames me
may anguish and trouble come upon him.
(If his desire were of things just or proper
and his tongue were not mixing calumny
then shame would not possess him
and he would make his accusation outright
instead of whispering.)
Let that man go
and put his snout to the ground
like any pig in search of other filth
for our association
is more than that which
I have taught to you
and it shall survive
longer than pillars of stone.

When roses revive
and the melilot with all its blooms
is here again, and he is not,
we shall remain.
This man has but one life
and is coarse (without knowledge
of the flowers which come from Pieria).
When he is dead no one
will have a recollection of his life.
Forever he will move obscure
in the darkness of the house of death
wandering unrecognized
among such of the dead
as are forgotten men.

But you and I, Anactoria,
we are not circumscribed
by this man or his conception of morality
nor by this village or this island.
No, nor by this time alone or by this sea
nor by the mainland there
or by the seas encircling it
nor by a further sea.

For us there are many lives
and, hear me, girl,
they shall be lived
in spite of all that this man says.

• • •

ALWAYS YOU

By Nathan I. Fine

Your image flames before me
In the dim moment when consciousness departs
And melts into sleep.
There are no weird fantastic dreams
To haunt my slumber,
There is a soothing peacefulness
And you, always you,
Radiant with the fresh glow of youth
That breathes joy into my heart.

Suddenly I awake,
There is a fierce pounding in my breast
As I gaze, and try to pierce
The quivering blackness that throbs around me.
You are so close to me, you must be near,
I feel your presence, and trembling
I speak your name.
The silence, like a living creature,
Presses down on me and whispers,
"I am her messenger,
For she too breathes your name."

THE IDEAL OF FEMININE BEAUTY AT THE TIME OF RONSARD

By MARCEL FRANCON

Scholars are agreed that throughout the Middle Ages the ideal woman of the courtly poets was blond. But a change occurs, or becomes noticeable, in the sixteenth century; so that, contrary to the old ideal, we find in the poems of Ronsard women whose hair and eyes are dark. It is with this change that I am now concerned. I shall try to explain why the poets of the sixteenth century turned to a new type of feminine beauty.

What, more exactly, was the old type? Unfortunately the poets of the Middle Ages give us few details, but these all have to do with fair hair. Thus the Troubadours, if they refer to no other concrete particular, refer to this. And the same thing is true of the French lyric poets. They speak of the beloved's blond hair, although they never mention the color of her eyes. Again, in epic and romance, the lady is always fair, her eyebrows dark and arched, her eyes *vairs,* that is, of variable hue, and bright. It is rarely that dark-haired women are praised in the poetry of the Middle Ages, and then, more frequently than not, in poems accompanied by music of a popular character. Nor was this preference of the poets for the blond type of beauty confined to France; it was the rule as well in Italy, Germany and England. It was not till the middle of the fourteenth century, in Boccacio's *Ameto,* that a dark woman is mentioned without the customary dispraise. The long line of fair ladies from antiquity to modern times is interrupted by only one notable exception: the heroine of the *Song of Songs.* Indeed the fashion of blond women is so entrenched that ancient and medieval authors as, for example, Vincent de Beauvais in his *Speculum naturale* provide recipes for bleaching the hair.

It is, therefore, remarkable that in French and Italian popular poetry the ideal woman is not blond but dark. Frequently, as in Italy, she is contrasted with the blond type and judged to be superior and more beautiful. Likewise

in French popular poetry the beloved is nearly always dark complexioned. Not that popular poetry is an exactly definable category. Such poetry was anonymous and transmitted orally, so that it is difficult, if not impossible, to do more than guess at the date and place of composition of a popular work. Definition is all the more precarious, since community life in the Middle Ages was more unified than it is today. There was not the same gap between the cultured and uncultured, the same alienation between one class and another. Accordingly, there is no clear cut distinction between the popular poetry of the Middle Ages and aristocratic, literary poetry. Often a courtly poem and a satiric bourgeois composition were the work of the same man. Nor was either work meant to appeal merely to a single class. Yet if popular and aristocratic poetry are not strictly separable, it is likely, as a recent scholar points out, that the popular, peasant classes, whether gradually or all at once, rejected the terms and expressions suggestive of the habits and tastes of another class; such terms, for example, as bore a definitely literary character or belonged to the language of the townsfolk. In this way it becomes possible to explain the special features of so-called popular poetry, although such poetry arose at a time when social divisions were not hard and fast. While these divisions existed in medieval society and account for the differences between aristocratic and popular art, they were not so great as to result in the divorce of one class from the other and in the isolation of the ruling stratum from life itself. It is for this reason that medieval culture displays a high degree of unity and, on its aristocratic as well as popular side, is related to actual life.

But this unity of life and culture did not last. By the time of the Renaissance the cleavage between them became marked. For, with the increasing division of labor, social life became less and less unified and the separation between classes more pronounced. And the intellectual culture that grew up on this basis, that is, the humanism and platonism of the Renaissance, contributed in its turn to widening the gap between spiritual and material production, between master and worker, between rich and poor, between the tutored

and the untutored. Ever since, art and culture have tended to develop in isolation from real life and material existence.

What had happened? The answer is that a great social transformation was in process. A new class, the bourgeoisie, was struggling for power which it could only achieve by destroying the feudal order. And by the sixteenth century the men who counted in social life were no longer the feudal landlord, the warrior or the church dignitary, but the banker and the manufacturer. At first these men had to fight for recognition, but by the middle of the sixteenth century they were well on their way to conquering state power.

This social transformation had momentous effects upon literature. For with the advent of the sixteenth century French literature assumes a bourgeois, middle class character. Toward the middle of the century, with the Pléiade, there seems to have been a return to the aristocratic ideal. Early in the sixteenth century as a result of the social changes then afoot, there is a change in poetry from the blond to the dark type of feminine beauty. The first French courtly poem I have been able to discover in which a dark woman is praised is a rondeau in ms. 402 of Lille:

> Elle me plaist, parce qu'elle est brunete.

The example is all the more interesting, since at the time of this poem's composition the blond type was still predominant. The heroine of *Palamon et Archita,* written in 1521 by Anne de Graville, conforms to medieval tradition, but only in part:

> Beaucoup cheveux ne trop noirs, ne trop blonds
> Mais bien dorés pendans jusqu' aux tallons
> Le front fort plain, yeulx vers toujours rians.

Anne de Graville was herself blond, if one may judge from miniatures. Although René de Maulde la Clavière claims that Françoise de Foix, the mistress of Francis I, was blond, her portraits bear out Henri Lemonnier's description: her eyes were blue, her hair blond, though turning to reddish brown. Mme. de Chateaubriand's rival was

dark, as was the first known love of the Duke of Angoulême. It may be more than a coincidence that the type of woman loved by Francis I and the woman of our rondeau were both dark. But let us look a little further into the poetry of the sixteenth century. Here is Clément Marot in praise of a brunette:

> La chanson est (sans en dire le son)
> **Allegez moy, douce plaisant' Brunette.**
>
> **(Epig. CCVIII)**

Although Marot is here quoting from a *chanson,* apparently a popular song, he celebrates the beauty of dark women on his own account, as in the following verses:

> Lorsque je voy en ordre la brunette.

This supports the view that the woman loved by Marot was dark, although M. Abel Lefranc, who argues that this woman was Anne d'Alençon, daughter of Charles, does not prove that the latter was dark.

Sometimes the poet feels obliged to apologize for the dark hair of the admired lady, as in the following:

> Brunette elle est, et pourtant elle est belle.

It is interesting, too, to notice the incipit of one of the songs listed by Rabelais in the *Cinquiesme livre,* chapter XXX, *bis*:

> Par trop je suis brunette.

Finally there is the case of Ronsard. He uses the same words as those quoted from Marot above:

> Allege moy douce plaisant brunette.
>
> **Amours, XIV, livre I)**

Ode XL tells us what Ronsard's feminine ideal was:

> Noir je vueil l'oeil, et brun le teint
> Bien que l'oeil verd toute la France adore.

Many other passages might be quoted in which Ronsard glorifies the dark type of feminine beauty. As Muret says in his commentary:

> "Si le Poète parle souvent des cheveux dorez, de l'or des cheveux de sa dame, it entend par ce mot D'or, et Doré, une chose belle, a la mode des Grecs: autrement il contreviendroit a son intention. Car il ne se peult faire, ou rarement ce fait, qu'une Dame aux yeux bruns aye les cheveux blonds, mais si bruns, ou noirs, ou chasteigniers." He had already said: "Est a noter que les anciens estimoient l'oeil noir estre un des points les plus requis a la perfection de beauté. D'ou est que Vénus est nommée par Pindare helichopis c'est a dire aux yeux noirs, en l'Ode sixième des Pythies, et par Hésiode en la Théogonie, **helichoblepharos.** Ainsi mesme est appellée Chryseis au premier de l'Iliade, 98 (. . .) Et Homère a baillé mesme épithète aux Muses (. . .) Les Latins ne l'ont pas ignoré, entre lesquels, Horace a dit aux Odes (I, XXXI, II):
>
> Et Lycum nigris oculis, nigroque
> Crine decorum.
>
> Et en "L'Art Poétique (V. 37)
> Spectandum nigris oculis, nigroque capillo."

Although Ronsard in his sonnets, elegies, *chansons,* almost always speaks of dark hair and dark eyes, this is not to say that he withholds his admiration from fair-haired ladies. Yet it is difficult to accept P. de Nolhac's contention. This critic writes:

> "On peut voir en ces formules convenues (blonds, dorés, d'or filé) une concession toute littéraire de débutant a un type de beauté consacré par la poésie."

Ronsard's references to the golden hair of his ladies is not confined to the poems of his youth and where, on the contrary, he mentions dark hair it is with an erudite and literary intention. Ode XL is in a way a sequel to Marot's *chanson* in which Marot writes:

> "Prenez la brunette."

Is it permissible to conclude, therefore, that the women loved by Ronsard were dark? The fact is that nothing precise is known about these women, and although scholars have provided a few details they have had to fall back upon information given by the poet himself. Hence this line of inquiry is inconclusive. Nor can it be maintained that Ron-

sard's descriptions of women are motivated by realistic considerations, any more than it can be maintained that they are a form of antipetrarquism. The best interpretation seems to me to be this. At the start of the sixteenth century, with poets like the two Marots, a popular influence begins to make itself felt in literature. And I am suggesting that the reason for this is social; that labor or the third estate was acquiring a new significance. Although Marot is a courtly poet, he yet expresses ideas and feelings which have a distinctly middle class quality. Many of his poems are akin to popular poetry. So the dark woman of popular poetry makes her appearance in literary and courtly poetry. Ronsard undoubtedly had Marot in mind in characterising the ideal woman as dark, for he alludes to the same popular poem that we have seen Marot using. Nor is this all. Ronsard had discovered that many of the ancients conceived of Venus as dark. So there is reason to suppose that Ronsard idealized the dark woman because of two influences: first, the influence, through Marot, of popular poetry, and secondly, the influence of classical literature. Thus Ronsard, though his contempt of the masses was great and his aristocratic tastes extreme, yet introduced a popular element into French literature. And there is a parallel to all this in another feature of Ronsard's work. The success of Marot's translations of the Psalms which were sung to popular tunes inspired Ronsard's own interest in music. There was still another reason for this interest. Since music played an important part in the lyric poetry of the ancients, Ronsard, following their example, composed many of his poems with an eye to their musical accompaniment.

Though other influences may have been at work the underlying cause of the change from the blond to the dark type was social. Certain scholars have argued that this change was purely personal and signified nothing more than that the poets who praised dark women were actually in love with such women. But the argument is flimsy, for in the great majority of cases we know little or nothing about the actual women whom the poets had in mind and whose physical features they were presumably praising. Even in those cases where the poet's love has been identified — and

the identification is nearly always uncertain — it is a moot point whether she was dark or not. Realism therefore does not take us very far. As Jacques G., in the second half of the sixteenth century realized, many poets endowed their ladies with golden hair when, in fact, these ladies were dark. So Lilly writes: "Oftentime, for fashion sake you call them beautiful, whom you know black."

The sixteenth century then, ushers in a new conception of feminine beauty. As Alden, commenting on the sonnets of Shakespeare, says: "To import into poetry admiration for brunettes was something new." And he gives examples of the new fashion. "Polizian," he says, "pays homage to his *Brunettina,* Tasso calls Leonore Sanvitale *bruna, ma bella,* and in a sonnet to Giula Negri he plays with the words *negra* and *alba.*" Alden adds that the "mistresses of Mezzabarba and Alamanni have dark hair," although "Tasso declares flatly that his mistress is not beautiful, that her hair is not golden." Other examples might be cited. There is the "Nut Brown Maid" (about 1500) and there is Wyatt's sonnet (no. 28) in which these lines occur:

> Since I did refrayne
> Brunet, that set my wealth in such a rore.

And there is the following from Nicholas Yonge:

> Brown is my love, but graceful.
>
> **(Musica Transalpina, 1597)**

This line is especially interesting, for it corresponds to Ovid's verses:

> Candida me capiet, capiet me flava puella,
> Est etiam in fusce grata colore venus.
>
> **(Amor II, 4, 39)**

There is also the Vulgate:

> Nigra sum sed formosa

although both the Hebrew and Greek versions contain words corresponding to *and,* and also to the French text already cited:

Brunette elle est, et pourtant elle est belle.

Thus the words *etiam, sed, pourtant, yet,* indicate a common tradition.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there is a return in French poetry to the blond type of beauty. So André Chénier, basing himself upon the *Anthology,* writes about the *Jeune Tarentine*:

Et pour ses blonds cheveux les parfums préparés.

Similarly Leconte de Lisle in the *Enlèvement d'Européia* evokes the graceful picture of:

. . . trois vierges, avec des rires ingenus
Laissant sur leur époule errer leures boucles blondes.

F. Gaiffe has pointed out that during the *Fronde* and up to the end of the eighteenth century the heroines of French literature are, in general, blond. Consequently the dark type seems to be peculiar to the sixteenth century, and even then was not universal, for not all the members of the Pléiade followed the example of Ronsard. It is then my conclusion that one of the basic factors in the change from the medieval conception of feminine beauty was the rise and influence of the bourgeoisie, which together with the peasantry and proletariat were destined to abolish the old feudal order. If the bourgeois rise to power was checked in the course of the sixteenth century, and medieval conceptions, including that of feminine beauty, were reinstated, still the life had gone out of them, and they were definitely discarded by the nineteenth century.

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THE BOAT OF LOVE

(A Masque for Music)

By Ralph Adams Cram

The sea is smooth and flowing: golden under a golden sun. In the flood of last light, ivory palaces and opal, pale towers and swelling domes rise from the sea in the midst of dark cypresses and ilex trees. Painted galleys hung with splendid shields and with crimson and amber sails, drift in the mellow light before the gentle wind. The sound of bells and of distant singing comes over the lapping waves. The air is heavy with perfume; it is very still.

I

A Wave Song

Wavering, wandering waves,
Born of the passing desire
Of weaving winds for the dusky, passionate deep,
Into our curling hands,
For us, Wave-Daughters to keep,
God has given
The crystal orb.
The shimmering sphere where the opal fire,
Rent and riven,
Flickers and curls like a flaunting sword:
The Wonder of Life and Death.

The Crystal turns in our hands.

Over the sliding sea
Gold galleons heave and swing,
And the hounding gales swell the sounding sails
And the gonfalon of the King:
And by the side of the splendid pride
Of a nation, a shallop slips,
A sea-shell boat on the waves afloat,
Like a rose-leaf tossed on the foam.
And our curling lips
Kiss their sliding sides,

And our little hands press them on,
On through the wandering, wanton tides,
On, to the far-off home,

The Crystal turns in our hands.

Over the crawling sea,
The caravels climb and slide,
And scarlet galleys through tangled alleys
Of wilful wind and treacherous tide,
Dizzily wind,
Baffled and blind,
Over the crawling sea.
And our little hands with golden bands
Of long lithe seaweed wind their sides,
And draw them down
Where the sea-horse rides
Under the crawling sea.

Wavering, wandering waves,
We who hold in our hands
The Crystal sphere,
Alpha, Omega,
Secret of timeless time:
Out of the swallowing sea, out of Eternity,
We call the Wonder of Life.
Unto the silent deep, into its infinite sleep,
We yield the Wonder of Death.

II

The Narrator Sings

Where the solemn ships are sailing
Westward, seaward, side by side:
Where the golden day is failing
Down the ebbing, drifting tide:
Past the city wondrously
Wrought of gold and ivory,
Vanishing where mists are paling
All its towering, splendid pride:

Where the clouds are rising, rifting,
Where the red sun swims and dips,
Comes a rose-wreathed shallop, drifting
Heedlessly among the ships;
And a girl with dreaming eyes,
Smiles and dreams with fantasies;
Where a man lies silent, lifting
Bearded mouth to bending lips.

And the gaunt and gray sea-rover
Underneath his ship's wide wings,
Laughs aloud, and leaning over
Looking downward, scoffs and flings
Scornful words and raillery:
And the night wind lovingly
Sweeps them seaward, and the lover
Lifts a lute, and smiles and sings:—

III

The Lover Sings

The day is dying above,
The waves are falling asleep;
Over the drowsy deep
We sail to the land of Love.

Ye that labor and rove
Over the wailing sea,
Rest: and even as we,
Sail to the Land of Love.

Slowly, softly, we move
In the day's dying gleams,
Over the sea of dreams
Unto the Land of Love.

IV

The Narrator Sings

And they hear no laugh nor railing,
Curling scorn nor lazy jest,
As the rose-red boat goes sailing

Towards the dim, mysterious West;
Where the purple argosies
Sought the shafts of Hercules:
Towards the waste of waters, wailing
Where the storm clouds droop and rest.

Like a splendid pageant, slowly
Forging forward, one by one,
Battle galleons, and the holy
Boats of friars westward run.
Lofty merchants, proud and high,
Bold crusaders sweeping by,
Crowding seaward, great and lowly,
Ere the long, last light is done.

And the dusk is full of singing
As the ships go sliding by;
Songs of greed of gold, and ringing
Battle music, fierce and high:
Chant of monks who serve the Lord,
Song of Cross and Song of Sword,
Drifting round the shallop, winging
Aimless, onward dreamily.

V

The Merchant Sings

Afar on the edge of the world,
Is a land that is weary and old,
And the sleeping ocean is curled
Round a shore where the sands are of gold.

And a city rests on the rim
Of the silver sea, and is dumb:
With ways that are dusky and dim,
And streets where new feet never come.

And out of the dubious ways
Of the uttermost, ultimate land,
Slow caravans crawl in the haze
Of a desert of shimmering sand.

It is there that my galleons go
Urged on by a following wind,
To return to me, laboring slow
With the wealth of the infinite Ind.

Frankincense, sandal and nard,
Musk, and the soul of the rose;
Ivory, amber and sard,
Opals where faint fire glows.

Pale pearls, chrysolites, cymophanes,
Great emeralds, green tourmalines,
Chrysoberyls with flickering veins,
Carnelians, aqua marines.

With the limitless ransom of Kings
I will buy me an Emperor's nod:
With the treasure my galleon brings
I will buy me the Power of God.

VI

Four Warriors Sing

Afar on the edge of the world,
Hated of God and our King,
Is a nation of knaves;
To dig them their graves
We sail, and sail, and sing:
Afar to the edge of the world.

CHORUS: Swords were made for men to use!
Soldiers only crave
Now to win, if then to lose;
Now to love, if then to choose
Fame, or shallow grave.

Afar on the edge of the world
Are grain fields ready for war;
And no man shall pity
The wide, rich city,

Nor linger for bolt or bar;
When we fight on the edge of the world.

CHORUS: *Swords were made for men to use,* etc.

Afar on the edge of the world
Is fighting for him who will;
And women and treasure,
To hand without measure,
And wine, till we drink our fill;
While we sing on the edge of the world.

CHORUS: *Swords were made for men to use,* etc.

Afar on the edge of the world
Are love, and honor and life
For the soldier that's brave,
But death for the slave
And the coward that shrinks from the strife;
Sail on, for the edge of the world.

CHORUS: Swords were made for men to use;
Soldiers only crave
Now to win, if then to lose,
Now to love, if then to choose
Fame, or shallow grave.

VII

A Monk Sings

Afar on the edge of the world,
O Brothers, the night is deep,
And the wrath of the Lord is hurled
On blind men, drunken with sleep,
And the angels with weary wings furled,
And Our Lady, look downward and weep.

VIII

A Crusader Sings

The torch of the Lord is kindled, the beacon is blazing
To lead ye against the proud Paynim; on high ye are raising
The Cross of the Crucified, holy, invincible; praising
Christ and Our Lady!

Chorus:

Has He not blessed them, your falchions, girt them about you?
Armed you with armor impregnable? Who then shall rout you?
Saints and Archangels fight with us, hailing them, shout you:
Christ and Our Lady!

Chorus:

The day of the Lord is come, the darkness is broken.
Death to the heathen blasphemer, the Lord God has spoken.
We take His sword gladly, praise ye Him, shout as a token:
Christ and Our Lady!

Chorus:

IX

A Monk Sings

In the death-blackened depths of the night,
O Brothers, are grief-stricken men;
Sad women who grope for the light
Through a pestilent wilderness, then
Turning, toil back without sight,
Hopeless and baffled again.

X

The Friars Sing

God, Who never man forsaketh,
Sends us, servants of the Word;
Preaching Him Who sorrow taketh,
Bringing peace and not a sword,
Leading men to Him who slaketh
Thirst of sinners, Christ, the Lord.

See the lights of heaven burning,
Blazing beacons on the sea;
Stars to guide us, never turning,
Towards the slaves our hands shall free:
Lamps of Christ Who, loving, yearning,
Leads us landward, faithfully.

And the night shall turn to morning,
And the bitter tears be dried,
While the solemn wind of warning
Only heard to be defied,
Dies away before the dawning
Of the love no hate can hide.

Praise ye Him Who succour sendeth,
God the Father on His throne;
Praise the Christ Whose love befriendeth
Every faint and weary one;
Praise the Holy Ghost Who bendeth
All men unto God alone.

XI

The Narrator Sings

Twilight; and the slow ships ploughing
Foamy furrows in the sea
Forging forward, heaving, bowing,
Vanish in obscurity.
But the love-boat lingers long,
Drowsy with the languid song
Of a singer softly vowing,
Love to all Eternity.

XII

The Lover Sings

Heart of my heart! now the night
Deepens and droops on the world,
The sea drinks the dregs of the light,
And the wings of the wind are furled.

Heart of my heart! is there fear,
Is there dread of the dawn in your breast?
Dread of the dark that draws near?
Cling to me close, and so rest.

Heart of my heart! for thy love
I would fight with the night and the deep:
Scatter the darkness above,
Shackle the ocean in sleep.

Heart of my heart! close thine eyes,
For the dreams like the fire in the foam
Drift by us. The last twilight dies,
Sleep! for the sea is our home.

XIII

The Girl Sings

Dear Love, the night is bright with heavenly fire
When I'm with thee,
There is nor night, nor death, nor darkness dire
Nor fear, for me.
Fold thou thine arms around me, draw me nearer,
I have no life but only in thy breath,
God could not give me aught I should hold dearer
Than from thine eyes to drink the draught of death.

Sweet, though the sea rose like a mighty mountain
Sheer to the sky,
The waves were but the ripple in the fountain
If thou wert nigh.
I cannot see aught save thine eyes above me,
I only hear the heart-beats in thy breast,
I only know that from my soul I love thee,
I love thee, dear; care thou for all the rest.

The Lover Sings

Afar on the edge of the world, Dear Heart,
Where the red sun sinks in the sea,
Where the night wind brushes the clouds apart

And the gates of the night stand wide,
A city of dreams on the long, slow tide
Is builded for thee and for me.

Of jasper and jacynth the walls are wrought
And the pavement is serpentine
Red gold are the domes, and the doors are fraught
With the pearls of the wine-black sea,
They close, and we stand there free,
For the city is thine and mine.

Afar on the edge of the world, afar
From the harsh hot clamour of life
The Lord of Love, where the love-lands are
Has wrought us a world of sleep
Built high on the brink of the deep
With its domes in the sunset sky.

Together we sail to the edge of the world
Down the road of the sinking sun
Into the night where the clouds are curled
Round the city of perfect love.
The swift hours circle above,
Then the great dawn breaks, and our sail is furled
For the harbor of sleep is won.

The Girl Sings

In the Land of Love shall we find a haven,
Dear, in the Land of Love?
From night and death and the wintry tempest
And storm clouds streaming above?
Shall we find release from the surging tide
Of sorrow that gathers from every side?
Shall the hard world's hand come not to sever
Our love, in the Land of Love?

The Lover Sings

In the Land of Love we will lie forever,
Dear, in the Land of Love,
Nor night, nor death comes ever, nor tempest,
While a gold moon lingers above,

Deep gardens sleep in the drowsy tide
Of dreams that gather from every side
And the hard world's hand comes not to sever
Our love, in the Land of Love.

XIV

The Sea-spirits Sing

Sleep and the twilight of dreams droop over the wavering waters,
The world is drowned in the dusk, and the tall cities sink into silence.
Out of the infinite east, the night with his soft-footed horses
Comes in his coruscant car, with jewelled wheels slowly revolving.

Sleep and the twilight of dreams draw close where the laboring galleys
Sail over the edge of the world, and sink in the purple abysses.
Night is abroad on the deep, and all the omnipotent ocean
Sleeps, for the infinite wings of the dark are spread wide on its bosom.

XV

The Narrator Sings

Silence! save a sound of grieving,
While the looming moon of brass
Lifts above the ocean, heaving
Hungrily. As in a glass
Dusky shadows stagger by,
Waving wings along the sky,
Where the tangled winds are weaving
Webs of tempest as they pass.

XVI

Wave Song

Wanton, wallowing waves
Hungry for life or death,
Wake! for the word of the Lover is loud in the night!
Storm from the north!
Tempest and whirlwind of wrath,

Sweeps to you
Leaps to you
Laughing with lust for your love!
Awake! Awake!
See through the darkness the leap of the levin that streams
Fiercer than flame, 'round his feet.

The Crystal has turned in our hands!

Over the shouting sea
Leaping with sweeping desire,
See where the lord of the quivering sword
Comes in a whirlwind of fire!
Rise to him, rise! till the cowering skies
Shrivel and shrink in their fear,
We are the daughters of weltering waters
Welcome the Wakener!
Hear!
Children of spume and spray!
Clutch for the scuttling prey!
Blind with affright through the huddling night
The shivering galleons go,
Follow the trail through the hail and the gale
Grip them and drag them below!
Batter them, shatter them,
Merrily scatter them,
Rive them and sink them amain!
We are the daughters of weltering waters,
Welcome the Wakener!
Hear!
Children of spume and spray
Laugh through the rain till he hears us again,
The Wakener! Laugh for the fray!

XVII

The Narrator Sings

Through the tempest, dawn is breaking,
But the wrack of flying foam
Opens round no tall ship making

Shift of sail to win her home.
Sinking silent through the sea
Plunges all the majesty
Of the galleons, awakening,
Rising, nevermore to roam.

All along the heaving ocean
Sweep the shreds of streaming cloud,
And the waves with weary motion
Soften to a purple shroud.
Far and very far away
Sailing through the lifting day
Beats the Boat of Love. Devotion
Victor over all the proud.

XVIII

The Sea-spirits Sing

Into Thy hands, O God, all things that Thy Word hath created
Yield the last judgment and bow before Thy supreme domination.
No man may fathom Thy Will, nor judge Thine inscrutable Wisdom
Only, veiling his pride, confess Thee the infinite Master.

What in Thy sight are the men that mock Thine unspeakable glory?
They that forget Thee for gain or deny Thee for craving of conflict?
Yea, in Thine all-seeing eyes what are they that would yield Thee assistance
Knowing no jot of Thy Will, the vain-glorious guides of the Godhead.

Like as the blossoming grass in the fields, that is and then is not:
So are the children of men whereof Thou art Warder and Keeper.
One thing Thou wilt not destroy, the semblance of Thine own existence,
The Love that lightens the world: the Love that is God in His Kingdom.

CONTEMPORARY POETRY IN SPAIN

By JOHN CROW

Among the Spanish poets of this century perhaps the most outstanding are the brothers Antonio and Manuel Machado, and Juan Ramón Jiménez. They all come from the province of Andalusia, and all possess the high degree of sensitivity characteristic of that southern region.

Manuel Machado (1874 —), in the words of one critic, is the Spanish poet who best represents the modernist movement on the peninsula. He fuses French techniques with the traditional forms of Spanish folk and classic poetry, and on occasion reveals a certain amount of the impressionistic decadence and surfeit, qualities of the modernist movement wherever its seeds have grown. None the less, there is a purity of lyricism about all of Manuel Machado's poems which often raises them to heights that few poets have attained. In his most famous volume of verse, *Alma,* 1902, he gives the following analysis of himself: "I prefer the purely chic or things characteristic of the bull-fight to things Hellenic, and a ray of sunlight or a timely laugh to the languishings of the moon." Some people have called him half-gypsy and half-Parisian, and that generalization is about as good as any other.

SONNET

By MANUEL MACHADO

"Youth, springtime of life . . ."
— Carducci

Because spring is a woman . . . and possesses
Warm eyes, red lips, sweet breasts, and perfumed breath;
Because she comes like love with flowing tresses,
And full of life's gay thoughtlessness of death . . .

Because she gives us buds — white orange blooms —
Which soon the luscious orange fruits disclose . . .
Because she is illusion, and perfumes
Hope, beauty, songs, and scent of generous rose . . .

You called her — master — Youth! . . . a facile word,
But not so fortunate although it may
Resound a thousand times when life is stirred.

Like Spring, Youth too is brief — a tender thing . . .
But gone, it never comes again our way
As do return — always! — the months of Spring.

ANTONIO MACHADO

Because he has not been carried away with any of the fads or schools of the day, and because there is within him a sincerity, a certainty, and a profundity which defy limitations of time and epoch, Antonio Machado is perhaps the greatest poet to write in the Spanish language during the last two or three hundred years. He was born in Seville in 1875, but has spent most of his mature life in Castile. He died in France a few months ago, a refugee from the Franco government.

Antonio Machado expresses his poetic creed by making this comparison of himself with Rubén Darío: "I also admired the author of *Prosas profanas,* the inimitable master of form and sensation, who later on revealed his depth to us in his *Cantos de vida y esperanza.* But I tried — and note that I do not boast of success but of purpose — to follow quite a different path. I thought that the poetic element was not the word in its phonic value, nor color, nor line, nor a complexity of sensations, but a deep palpitation of the spirit; what the soul expresses, if it does express anything, or what it says, if it does say anything, in its own voice in animated response to its contact with the world."

CANTE JONDO

(*Deep Song*)

By Antonio Machado

The dusk sifted into my breathless room,
Wide open to a torrid summer night,
And wrapped its hands about my desolation
As I unwound its tattered shreds of light.

Then on the air a sudden blaze of sound:
Deep sobbing of a wistful, broken strain
That quivered with the sombre tremolos
Of tragic songs from my own southern Spain.

. . . And it was Love, a red and fiery flame . . .
Whose nervous hand upon the vibrant strings
A long and golden pause sustained
That soon flashed into stars with gilded wings —

. . . And it was Death, the scythe upon his shoulder,
Grim-faced and skeletal, with steps long-drawn and slow.
— Thus did I dream of him when but a child —

On the guitar, sonorous, tremulous below,
A brusque hand as it strummed would imitate
The lowering of a casket in the ground.

The breath of wind was but a solitary wail
That winnows ash and stirs the dust around.

JUAN RAMON JIMENEZ

Born in 1881, Juan Ramón Jiménez, leader of contemporary poets in Spain and Spanish America for the past several years, is still alive, and recently made a trip to the United States to speak for the Loyalist cause. As the famous Spanish critic, Federico de Onís, says, Juan Ramón Jiménez and Rubén Darío are the two poles around which modernism in Hispanic poetry has revolved: Darío serving

as a focus of the precursors and of the modernists, Juan Ramón Jiménez as a focus of the many schools which follow modernism. The latter poet is himself the center of many diverse influences, but he depends largely on the traditional Spanish forms for expression, and so helped pave the way for the young Federico García Lorca, recently killed in the Spanish Civil War, who exerted a more widespread influence on Spanish America than any other writer of the peninsula during the past few years.

SELECTED POEMS

By Juan Ramon Jimenez

I

This is my life, that of the sky,
That of the pure air passing by,
That of the pinioned, lonely, last bird,
That of the darkest peak's golden word!

This is my freedom, to smell the rose,
To cut the cold water where my wild hand goes,
To strip the green - fingered forest at night,
To catch from the sun its eternal light!

II

What becomes of a strain of music
When it ceases to sound; what
To a breath of air that ceases
To stir, and what
To a light blown out?

Speak, Death, and what art thou but silence,
Stillness and shadow?

III

What better creed,
What greater prayer,
Than to smile at roses
On morning air;
To place their chaste souls
In our own to stay;
To desire all of life
With their fragrance and spray.

IV

All the roses are but one rose,
Of love! The only rose;
And everything's contained in it,
Fleeting image of the world
Of love, the only rose.

• • •

MORNING

By Anne Marriott

The heavy darkness over lawn and bed
Dissolves in thin grey light. Leaves stir.
The garden waits, faint in the lifeless dawn,
To hold cup-like in its curved walls the rare
Restoring wine of sunlight. Petal, blade,
Carved stalk, stretch upward silently, craving
The first red gleam which brings returning life.
Roses are colorless, short pansies dun,
Tarnished daisies crouch among the shivering dew.
There is no sound.

Suddenly the giant sun
Steps up the silver-treaded stairs of dawn.
The rose burns redder than the flaming sky,
The polished daisies dance, silver and gold!
The garden's perfumed glory overflows
Its damming walls, and pours in purple light
Down the shining stretches of the morning road!

TWO SONNETS

By Charles Baudelaire

Translated by Anna Balakian

"SWEET BELLS JANGLED OUT OF TUNE"*

*Although "cracked bell" is the literal translation for "cloche felée," nothing conveys the spirit of the poem better than these words taken from Shakespeare's **Hamlet.**

It is bitter and sweet, in the long winter nights,
To listen in the glow of pulsing, smoking fire
To souvenirs of yore that languorously rise
As the song of the chimes comes floating through the fog.

O happy, blissful bell whose breath is long and strong,
Who, though it has grown old, yet sturdy and alert,
Ne'er fails to pierce the air with its religious cry,
As an old soldier stands vigilant 'neath his tent!

Not so my wearied soul; it's jangled out of tune!
The songs it wants to send into the cold night air
Seem often nothing more than raucous, muffled moans

A wounded soldier makes, left alone in a pool
Of blood, fore'er forgot 'neath a great heap of dead,
And who dies, motionless, while struggling for his life.

RECUEILLEMENT

Be still, my sorrow, be gentle and serene.
You longed, you prayed for night; 'tis falling; it is here:
A mantle damp and dark around the city clings,
And some it clothes with peace, and some it clothes with fear.

And while the multitude of mortals, vile and vain,
Lives under pleasure's whip, that hangman with no heart,
And flowers of remorse it picks in slavish feasts,
My Sorrow, come, give me your hand; let's fly away,

Far from them, see the bygone years that lean and watch
From heaven's balconies in robes of other years;
Rise from its watery depths Regret that sadly Smiles;

The dying Sun that falls asleep beneath an arch,
And as if a long shroud, 'twere dragging from the East,
Oh, hark, my dear, hark the soft footsteps of the night.

UNWILLING SOJOURN

By Mary Willis Shelburne

Flesh is too tight and stiff a gown
for me. I shall be glad
to render it to earth, and cleave
the fine, unmeasured air.

I am too close to earth;
I would speed to distant stars
and then drop down
into that strange, pale ship, the moon.

Hue upon marvellous hue, Aurora flings
rich colors wide across the northern sky,
and I would wear them as an airy scarf;

I would take wing
higher than the golden eagle's flight
to where the Pleiads, pale and starry-eyed,
steal forth in soft timidity
after the day has died.

Riding the winds above the headlands to the sea,
I would compass mountains in my enterprise.

Will it be tonight I welcome him,
the Stranger with the hidden, secret eyes?

POEMS

By Francis Jammes

Translated by Joy Hausmann

BREAD

(From "*Les Géorgiques —chrétiennes*")
chant premier

Solid the farmhouse stood, its shadows wide,
And framed in sunny wheat on every side.

Thick shutters closed against the sunlight made,
Within, a spot for Peace's sister, Shade.

The house was circled round with happiness
Close as an island where blue waters press.

And there where only kindly words were said
Three generations broke their daily bread.

The father said: "When there is wheat to spare
For God we must enlarge the beggar's share."

The mother said, thoughtful of marriage dower:
"We must not waste the sickle's golden shower."

"We need dogs," said a son, "who will not lame,
When fields are thickly stubbled, thick the game."

A son's wife said: "This winter let us, please,
Renew the parlor's faded draperies."

The daughter said in her ingenuous way:
"My straw hat needs a new wild flower bouquet."

"We need, when man and wheat-stalk bow the head,
The tomb and barn ready," the grandfather said.

With windows wide, they broke their evening bread
Around the generous table neatly spread.

And, next, the servants all sat down to eat;
Then baked the golden bread, child of the wheat:—

Bread that by the sweat of the brow we gain,
The bread we break in happiness or pain,

Bread such as Abraham offered to the three
Who purged with fire Sodom's iniquity,

The heavenly bread that in the desert grew
From every drop of disappearing dew.

Bread of the Lord, heaped to the measure's brim,
Promised to those obedient to Him.

All sat or stood about the hearth, and low
They prayed, but how they prayed they did not know.

The bread rose in the oven as the wheat
When sap begins to boil in the young March heat.

The loaves expanded, puffed up one by one
By hearthfires of the oven and the sun.

In heaven's starry sheaves what manna lies
Foreshadowed in these loaves before our eyes?

O Lord, give us this day our daily bread.
Without Thee soul and body rest unfed.

MY HUMBLE FRIEND

(From "*L'Eglise habillée de feuilles*")

My humble friend, my faithful dog, you went,
Afraid of death. As from a wasp you fled
And hid beneath the table, while your head
Was turned to me in sad bewilderment.

Oh, common friend of man, may it be well
With you who shared his hunger as his meat,
You who companioned, trotting at their feet,
Tobias and the Angel Raphael.

My servant! Teacher, if I would be wise,
Who loved me as a saint his deity!
Your dim, unfathomed spirit is now free
To dwell within some happy paradise.

Ah grant, dear God, if such may be thy grace
That I shall dwell with Thee eternally,
Let a poor dog behold him face to face
Who was his god among humanity.

THE SWALLOWS

(From "*L'Eglise habillée de feuilles*")

When autumn comes, you see the long wires overhead
Outlined with swallows. There they sit in rows and shiver.
You know their little hearts are cold and full of dread.
Even the young, those who have never seen that shore
Think longingly of Egypt's warm unclouded skies.
"Those who have never seen!" I say. They are as we
Who long for Heaven so in our anxiety.
They hover there alert making a small endeavor
Upon the air, tracing a circle flight before
They hasten back to haunt the place they thought of leaving.
It is hard to forsake the shelter of the church
And hard to find no warmth on its familiar porch.
How sad they are! And, ah! Why has the walnut bough
Betrayed them so with not a leap upon it now?
The yearling brood is mystified, seeking to learn
Where spring is gone, now covered up with autumn's
grieving.

Like them, the soul though worn with many suffering hours,
Before embarking on the heavenward-flowing waters
To gain the Paradise of everlasting flowers,
Wavering, hopes to return yet hesitates at leaving.

WHO WOULD NOT LOVE TO GO HOME

(From *"Poèmes et mesures XVII"*)

Who would not love to go home as the woodsman goes
At night, with scent of holly clinging to his clothes,
To gain a little cabin, lift the heavy latch
Unwilling in his fingers, loose the groaning catch,
To sit beside the steaming, purring kettle that
Resembles the archéd back of a great dozing cat,
To hear the tinkling bells some distant horses wear,
While quietly his wife attends with gentle care
To what they both shall eat and what is in the kettle?
Will Jupiter be there at ease upon the settle?

CONSOLE ME NOT

(*Ne me console pas*)

Console me not. That is futility, my friend.
If all my dreams depart — which were my only wealth —
Quitting my door-sill where the shadows crouch in stealth,
I shall be resolute and silent at the end.

A day will come when I shall merely rest, and lie
(Console me not!) facing my sun-illumined door.
The children will be kept quieter than before,
And so, released from every sorrow, I shall die.

LITTLE GIRL READING THE ALMANAC

(*L'Enfant lit l'Almanach*)

Her egg basket close by, she reads the almanac.
Besides the Saints, and seeing when the moon is full,
She looks at all the pictures of the zodiac, —
The Goat, the Ram, also the Fishes and the Bull.

And so she can imagine, being country - bred,
That up above, there is a heavenly market - place
Where animals like hers are bartered, overhead —
Goats, rams, and donkeys, fish and bulls, on market days.

Of course! It is the heavenly market in the sky!
And turning pages, when the Scales appear, she says
That, just as in the groceries when people buy,
They weigh the coffee and the salt — and consciences.

• • •

FROSTED GLASS

By Edwin M. Erickson

The flame softened and tinged his frosted head.
The old priest turned. "I heard you come," he said.
I nodded. "Here, sit here, my boy. It's warm."
"It's peace I feel — coming here from the storm."
His pipe was dead and flame flickered again.
He smiled, "The snow is soft, not hard like rain.
Here now, look through those frosted small glass squares.
And hear the wind! See shadows dance in pairs.
There's life out there; only the dead stay here.
Now look once more — where squares of glass are clear.
You see the night, the darkness, bowing trees?
Good. You've seen God. Those edges where windows freeze —
They please our eyes, but hide a broader view . . . .
I talk too much. Something was troubling you?"

The night had changed. I said I'd stayed too long.
He paused — then, "Yes, I think your fear has gone."

THREE POEMS

By Leona Corel

THE RETURN

"I shall return to this loved place," you say,
"Retrace its paths, relive a golden day.
Pick sweet wild berries, hear the larches sigh,
Watch the hawk circle, black against the sky."

You will return and walk remembered ways,
See sapphire sky blend into purple haze,
Stand once again beside that gem - clear lake
Where herons wade, and hear its ripples break.

This you will do, but your bewildered eyes
Will look in vain to learn where rapture lies.
Relive a day? Less folly it would seem
To circumscribe the substance of a dream.

ENCHANTED HOUR

In what wood, cool and dim,
Do you flee the bright
Burning of mid - day sun,
To wander near the rim
Of that lake whose waters
Yield flowers of delight?

In what enchanted hour
Do you seek the light
Of inner fires that guide
Souls to that lofty tower,
Where beauty gleams clear
As a flame in the night?

THIS IS AN HOUR

This is an hour when time itself stands still;
The soaring hawk seems pinned against the sky.
The grass and sedges stand erect, no breeze
Whips into waves the pale green field of rye.

The waters of the little pond reflect
The arrow-head and reeds along its rim.
No ripple mars its calm, save when the spring,
Fed with deep waters, overflows its brim.

• • •

EVENING MEMORY

By Celia Keegan

Night's trailing hair, damp with the perfumed dew,
Brushes my lips, and from the floating mist
Cool fingers gently touch my lifted face
And I could swear that I had just been kissed.

Where are you now, this silent, eerie night?
Do you, too, walk alone and feel a start
Because some wraithlike form has passed close by —
And does the sudden pounding of your heart
Recall a distant night of ecstasy
When love walked hand in hand with you and me?

On such an evening, somehow, dear, I know
Your arms will hold me close, your kisses burn
Upon my lips again. So I must wait,
For, on a night like this, you will return.

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